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**The Independent State and the State of Independence
Chehabism's Challenge to Lebanese Democratic Stability**

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The Independent State and the State of Independence:
Chehabism's Challenge to Lebanese Democratic Stability

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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For my family, whose love and support made this project possible

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Abstract

In a country ruled by traditions, Lebanon's third president General Fouad Chehab was a moderniser with a radical, progressive vision. His unique political approach, Chehabism, developed out of a belief that socio-economic inequalities, not confessional differences, were at the root of Lebanon's civil conflicts. In order to secure a stable, prosperous future, Chehab believed his imperatives were to promote national unity and social justice among a divided and disillusioned public.

The Chehabists harnessed the full resources of the Lebanese state to advance stability, unity, and equality, but by the late 1960s, the country was more fractured than ever. They channelled their forces into strengthening and rationalizing state institutions, but ultimately left them weaker. They wanted to build a more meritocratic and democratic Lebanon, but in the end, they undermined Lebanese democracy.

This thesis seeks to make sense of these apparent paradoxes. In essence, it contends that the principles which underpinned Chehabism as a political approach were anathema to the integrity of Lebanon's existing political system. Independence-era Lebanon, in both law and practice, followed a consociational-democratic model whose stability depended upon elite cooperation and segmental autonomy. On the other hand, Chehab's vision for the country was drawn from an idealised western liberal-democratic model, which stressed centralised power, competition, modernisation, unity, and equality in ways that directly threatened and compromised consociational principles. President Chehab mistook the objective of his program for its object: He believed that he was working to reform or strengthen the Lebanese state, but in fact, to fully implement his program he would have had to rebuild it from the ground up. President Chehab and his followers and allies were, in effect, unwitting state-challengers rather than state-builders.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	2
Abstract	3
1. Introduction	7
Chehabism.....	9
Novelty & General Relevance.....	12
Research Questions	22
Overview of chapters.....	22
Lebanon's Political Tradition.....	25
<i>Origins of the Lebanese system</i>	25
Lebanism & Arabism.....	30
<i>Lebanism</i>	31
<i>Arabism</i>	32
<i>Clashing national ideas</i>	33
Lebanon's Constitutional Documents.....	36
The Lebanese Approach	41
2. Theoretical Framework.....	42
Consociational Democracy	43
<i>What is consociational democracy?</i>	45
<i>The 'Democracy' Factor</i>	46
The Conditions of Consociational (In)Stability	49
<i>Majoritarianism</i>	51
<i>Nationalism</i>	52
<i>Modernisation</i>	53
<i>Preconditions</i>	53
Criticism & Responses	56
<i>Shortcomings</i>	58
The Origins of Consociational Democracies	60
Consociational Lebanon	61
<i>The State of the Consociation – Pre-Independence</i>	63
<i>Alternative approaches</i>	71
<i>Chehabism vs. Consociationalism</i>	82
A breakdown of analytical criteria	83
3. Chehabism.....	86

General Fouad Chehab.....	87
<i>Chehab's origins</i>	89
<i>Temperment</i>	107
The emergence and evolution of 'Chehabist' thought.....	113
Ideological influences.....	113
Chehabist principles and objectives.....	119
<i>Definitions of Chehabism</i>	120
<i>Modernisation and Le Social</i>	123
<i>National Unity</i>	126
<i>Chehab's project in his own words</i>	128
Conclusions.....	130
4. Phase One: Reform, Recovery, and Reconciliation.....	133
The Counter-Revolution	134
The fragile detente.....	142
Driving reform	149
Chehab's surprise resignation	160
Outcomes	165
<i>Consociationalism and Chehabism</i>	165
<i>Consociational outcomes</i>	170
<i>Chehabist outcomes</i>	174
<i>Conclusions</i>	175
5. Phase Two: Muscular Chehabism.....	177
The Chehabist drive for socio-economic reforms	178
The Abortive Coup.....	185
<i>The PPS</i>	187
<i>The coup attempt</i>	188
<i>The aftermath</i>	192
1964 Presidential Campaign	199
Outcomes	204
<i>Consociationalism and Chehabism</i>	205
<i>Consociational outcomes</i>	208
<i>Chehabist outcomes</i>	212
<i>Conclusions</i>	215
6. Phase Three: The Chehabist Decline	217
President Helou and the political elite	218

<i>The Deuxième Bureau and President Helou</i>	219
<i>Helou's approach to reform: L'Épuration</i>	221
<i>The rise of socio-economic discontent</i>	223
The collapse of Intra Bank	225
<i>The Fall of Chehabism</i>	232
Outcomes	235
<i>Consociational Outcomes</i>	237
<i>Chehabist Outcomes</i>	241
<i>Conclusions</i>	245
7. Conclusions	247
Bibliography	254

1. Introduction

As members of the Lebanese parliament gathered in April 2014 for the first of some forty-odd attempts to elect a thirteenth president, campaign posters appeared across the walls of Beirut: a debonair man draped in medals and the presidential sash stood in grainy, sepia portrait, his eyes locked with the viewer. Below, in Arabic, read the words: *Fouad Chehab for the Republic*.

General Fouad Chehab — Lebanon's third president — died in 1973. Yet he and his program for Lebanon, Chehabism, continue to resonate among successive generations of Lebanese disillusioned with contemporary political life. Why does Chehab, among all Lebanon's ex-presidents, bear such mythic stature?

In a country ruled by traditions, Chehab was a moderniser with a radical, socialist vision. Chehabism developed out of a belief that socio-economic inequalities, not confessional differences, were at the root of Lebanon's civil conflicts. In order to secure a stable, prosperous future, Chehab believed his imperatives were to promote national unity and social justice among a divided and disillusioned public.

Yet for all the incremental successes of Chehab and his followers, the project ultimately failed. Still more damning, just five years after Chehabism came to an end Lebanon collapsed into precisely the dystopian, sectarian civil war Chehab had assumed the presidential mantle to avert.

The Chehabists harnessed the full resources of the Lebanese state to advance stability, unity, and equality, but by the late 1960s, the country was more fractured than ever. They channelled their forces into strengthening and rationalizing state institutions, but ultimately left them weaker. They wanted to build a more meritocratic and democratic Lebanon, but in the end, they undermined Lebanese democracy.

Over the following chapters, this thesis will attempt to resolve these paradoxes through the following argument: the principles which underpinned Chehabism were anathema to the integrity of Lebanon's existing political system. Independence era Lebanon, in both law and practice, followed a consociational-democratic model whose stability depended upon elite cooperation and segmental autonomy. On the other hand, Fouad Chehab's vision for the country was drawn from an idealised western liberal-democratic model, which stressed centralised power, competition, modernisation, unity, and equality in ways that directly threatened and compromised consociational principles. President Chehab mistook the objective of his program for its object: He believed that he was working to reform or strengthen the

Lebanese state, but in fact, to fully implement his program he would have had to rebuild it from the ground up. President Chehab and his followers and allies were, in effect, unwitting state-challengers rather than state-builders.

Chehabist efforts to out-manoeuvre the *zu'ama*,¹ the elite vested in the current system – and the elite's corresponding reactions – tipped Lebanon into a perilous disequilibrium. This state of imbalance constrained decision-making by Chehab's successor, Charles Helou, undermined the government's legitimacy, led to the disempowerment of Lebanon's security forces, reinforced socio-economic divisions, and ultimately challenged the wellbeing of the country as a whole. In short, the domestic environment cultivated during the Chehabist era left Lebanon highly vulnerable to the same forces that would soon help tip the country into civil war.

The political scientist Michael Hudson once suggested that “further analysis of the Shihabist experiment and its failure” might hold vital clues for the development of a better Lebanese model.² Yet a quarter century on, Chehabism remains almost wholly unstudied. This project will detail Chehabism's advancement alongside indicators of consociational health at the time, exposing the causal processes which generated Chehabism's counterproductive results and, in the end, devastated both systems.

The objective of this research is multi-fold: First, to examine how and why Chehabist attempts to ‘strengthen’ the Lebanese state left it weaker, and explore the ways in which its seemingly democratic goals in practice undermined Lebanese democracy. In so doing, it will also bridge an unacceptable gap in Lebanon's historical record, filling in the long-forgotten details of a critically important yet murky era. Furthermore, a robust examination of Chehabism and Lebanon's political system lays the groundwork for subsequent investigations into the nature of the Lebanese state itself – another woefully under examined topic.

While this project specifically considers statebuilding and stability through the example of Chehabism, its conclusions may also be instructive in other cases where orthodox statebuilding models appear to have failed, especially in the non-Western world. I intend to provide sufficient evidence for these claims to allow limited generalisation and encourage comparative research.

¹ Hottinger defines the Lebanese *za'im* (pl. *zu'ama*) as “a political leader who possesses the support of a locally circumscribed community and who retains this support by fostering or appearing to foster the interests of as many as possible from amongst his clientele.” (Hottinger (1966), p. 85)

² Hudson (1988), p. 238

Finally, the conclusions of this study cast light on later reform efforts as well as political stability in Lebanon more generally, with strong implications for the present. Many of the pressures on contemporary Lebanon bear remarkable similarity to those of the Chehabist era: educated young people and intellectuals lament the salience of sectarian identity over national feeling; various domestic and international actors demand that Lebanon move towards the rationalised, competitive democratic political model; reform priorities routinely cite strengthening state security forces and extending the government's reach into the hinterlands, as reflected in the billions of dollars of international aid funnelled to these causes. The challenges elites present to democracy, stability, unity, and security in Lebanon likewise remain at the centre of national debate. With a civil war ongoing in Syria – and increasingly seeping into Lebanon – the regional climate in 2017 is arguably even more turbulent than that of the 1960s.

As people search for solutions, an idealised vision of Fouad Chehab's project and person continues to serve as the model for presidential integrity and reform among a significant tranche of the Lebanese population. It may not be a coincidence that in similarly tumultuous times, the man finally elected Lebanon's thirteenth president in late 2016, General Michel Aoun, is another former army commander whom his supporters view as above the traditional Lebanese political fray. Those vintage campaign posters illustrate Chehabism's connection to the present, but the wrong lessons are taken from Chehab's failed project. It is essential that in trying to solve Lebanon's most endemic problems they not be once again exacerbated.

Chehabism

The 'Chehabist' era coincided with independent Lebanon's 'golden age', but also with the first stage of its descent towards the 1975-90 civil war. During this period, President Fouad Chehab and his allies mounted an aggressive reform program popularly known as Chehabism or *al-Nahj* (the Method). Chehabism sought to bolster the state by promoting modernisation, social justice, and national unity while strengthening the security establishment. This attempt to expand and consolidate the government's remit came unapologetically at the expense of the elite, whom Chehab regarded as corrupt and ineffective *fromagistes*. Nonetheless, despite twelve years with significant power to advance their agenda, the Chehabists left a vulnerable Lebanese state in their wake.

General Fouad Chehab's reluctant ascent to the Lebanese presidency in the autumn of 1958 was negotiated as an act of national salvation. As commander-in-chief of Lebanon's Armed Forces, Chehab had kept the army on the sidelines of that year's brief but bitter civil war, and

in so doing was credited with preventing a more destructive contest. When the warring parties sought a new, consensual president as an exit from the quagmire, Chehab — the ‘father of the army’ —³ was the only man all sides could accept. In a sense, his selection and subsequent election were the symbolic peace accord that brought that crisis to a close.

Consequently, Chehab assumed a presidential mandate of unusual weight: He viewed his task as not only to lead, but to unite the Lebanese people behind their country and mend the societal damage wrought by the war.⁴ One of his first acts as president was to contract a French organisation, IRFED,⁵ to conduct an ambitious survey of national development to determine where need was greatest.⁶ Chehab embarked on a major program that saw administrative reform, the expansion of public services and support, and the extension of public utilities, education, and services into the periphery. He promoted more balanced economic development and established the Lebanese Central Bank. Significantly, he bolstered the security services, particularly the army’s *Deuxième Bureau* intelligence services, to promote law and order and curtail the power of the traditional elite, whom he saw as a root cause of corruption and insecurity in the country.⁷ Above all, Chehab strove to consolidate national feeling and build a more inclusive Lebanon, by pursuing a neutral foreign policy and more equitable distribution of government posts among Lebanon’s sects.⁸ He played a key role in selecting his successor, President Charles Helou, and the Chehabists maintained a majority in parliament.

Why, then, did Chehab’s carefully designed and implemented program fail to build a strong state? After his election, Helou quickly sought to distance himself from the Chehabist bloc, and they were routed in the 1968 parliamentary elections. Within what little has been written about Chehabism, a wide consensus exists on the program’s failure.⁹ Although Kamal Salibi, writing in the midst of the Chehabist era, cast the growth of national identity as Chehab’s “supreme achievement”,¹⁰ Michael Hudson finds Chehabism’s key shortcoming in the same domain. He notes that, “[Chehabism] seems not to have fared so well in inculcating a general sense of its moral worth -- it could not elicit the legitimacy from enough key elite and mass

³ Malsagne (2011), p. 103

⁴ Beshara (2005), pp. 51-52

⁵ IRFED is an acronym for Institut de recherche, de formation et de développement

⁶ Malsagne (2011), pp. 302-303

⁷ Malsagne (2011), pp. 273-74; 304

⁸ Salibi (1966), p. 225; Beshara (2005), p. 59

⁹ For example, see Gorla (1985); Hudson (1988); Corm (1988); Traboulsi (2012); Najem (2012)

¹⁰ Salibi (1966), p. 225

constituencies to re-establish a more liberal and participatory order.”¹¹ Many conventional accounts, to the extent that they discuss Chehabism’s failure at all, link its results to supposedly naive efforts to undermine the *zu’ama*, who perceived Chehabism as a threat to their interests.¹² While the confrontation between Chehab and his followers and the *zu’ama* was significant, if somewhat exaggerated,¹³ the processes at work require deeper interrogation and make little sense outside of the structural context of Chehabism’s design. It was not a simple issue of attitude or elite resistance. Moreover, as Salibi observes, Chehab’s strategies were complex: he deprived *zu’ama* of sources of patronage through his reforms and curtailed their activities through the *Deuxième Bureau*, but he also worked closely with members of this elite, and cultivated rivals to his opponents.¹⁴ Indeed, Adel Beshara goes so far as to argue that Chehab’s downfall came from his insistence on working *within* the political system.¹⁵

For Wade Goria, it was not Fouad Chehab that caused Chehabism to fail. He places primary responsibility on Chehab’s disappointing successor Helou, citing his lack of a natural political base, poor leadership abilities, failure to act as a secular, neutral arbiter among sects, and insufficient “manliness” in comparison to other contemporary leaders.¹⁶ Had Chehab, whom Goria identifies as “Lebanon’s most effective leader in modern times”, continued in office for another term, the Chehabist project might have been a success.¹⁷ Nadim Shehadi takes a different view, citing four key issues: that Chehabism came about through the will of the President rather than the people; that the IRFED survey itself was ill-suited to the Lebanese context; the possible prevalence of an “anarchist liberal ideology” resistant to Chehab; and the poor state of public administration and institutions to implement the Chehabist plan.¹⁸ All the above were almost certainly factors in the demise of Chehabism. None of these explanations on their own, however, is sufficient to explain Lebanon’s vulnerability and decline.

Chehabism’s failure — and the decline of the Lebanese state more generally in the late 1960s — is also often linked to the increased external loads on the system, most notably through the adventurism of Palestinian commandos and Israeli raids in Lebanon from the late 1960s

¹¹ Hudson (1988), p. 238

¹² Johnson (2000), pp. 59-60; Corm (2012), pp. 108-109; Traboulsi (2012), pp. 141-42

¹³ Salibi (1966), pp. 222-23

¹⁴ Salibi (1976), p. 11

¹⁵ Beshara (2005), p. 55, 76

¹⁶ Goria (1985), pp. 75-78

¹⁷ Goria (1985), pp. 246-247

¹⁸ Shehadi (1987), pp. 12-13

onwards.¹⁹ Again, these linkages are valid, but insufficient. Equally important are the internal factors which, when combined with these external pressures, made catastrophe inevitable: As we shall see, “the drama of the war ... diverted attention from the real sources of the malaise”.²⁰ This project will seek to locate all these factors within the broader conflict between Chehabist reform ideals and the *de jure* and *de facto* practices of Lebanon’s consociational system.

Novelty & General Relevance

This thesis offers a credible, robust, and historically sound explanation for the failure of Chehabism and the internal factors driving the decline of Lebanon’s political stability in the late 1960s. Little research has taken place on Chehabism itself. Fouad Chehab may be among the most resonant of Lebanon’s ex-presidents, but paradoxically he and his tenure have received the least scholarly attention. Adel Beshara’s book on the attempted coup against Chehab in 1961 offers the most extensive published treatment in English, though through the prism of this single event.²¹

Many books include a few pages on Fouad Chehab’s presidency, and some make reference to Chehabism as a project.²² This leads to overly simplistic accounts of the project’s failures which are not grounded in the historical record. Given the abundance of work on Lebanon’s 1975-90 civil war, a healthier literature addresses the period from 1967 onwards than the rest of the decade. However, it largely focuses on the external pressures noted above, given the orientation towards Lebanon’s descent into war. As for internal factors, confessionalism takes the blame.

Michael Hudson writes that, because “the pillars of the consociational-confessional system had been eroded” by the mid-1970s, it was unable to withstand external loads from the Palestinian-Israeli crisis.²³ Hudson maintains that the overly static consociational system itself was the ultimate culprit.²⁴ This argument is unconvincing and borderline tautological: it is effectively saying that the political system eroded itself.

¹⁹ Hudson (1976), pp. 114-115; Seaver (2000), p. 258; Cobban (1988), p. 100; Lijphart (1977), p. 154

²⁰ ‘No End to the Affair’, 14 Sep 1967, *The Times* (London), p. 23

²¹ Beshara (2005)

²² For example, see Kerr (1966); Traboulsi (2012); Najem (2012); Salibi (1976); Corm (2012); Barak (2009)

²³ Hudson (1976), pp. 117

²⁴ Hudson (1976), p. 114

Hudson speaks at some length on modernisation and social mobilisation, and their caustic interactions with consociationalism.²⁵ However, despite his recognition of this fundamental incompatibility, he consistently speaks of Chehab's modernisation and reform efforts in glowing terms. The closest he will come to criticism of Chehabism is acknowledging that these moves raised the ire of the *zu'ama*.²⁶ This thesis agrees that consociationalism obstructed modernisation and reform – but the inverse is also true. Since consociationalism was the system in place, its obstruction was far more deleterious to the country's health.

The following quote confirms Hudson's tendency to think about consociationalism and Chehabism in isolation: "If the 'traditional liberal system' (1943-58 and 1970-5) constituted a 'power sharing' model, the Shihabist era (1958-70) constituted a 'strong state' alternative. Both models failed".²⁷

Hudson comes closest to articulating an argument similar to that of this thesis. However, he fails to fully develop his ideas. He comes at the problem of Lebanon's decline from a point of view which prioritises modernisation and social mobilisation over other social goods (which he seems to take for granted). He complains that "all these developments have been taking place in Lebanon, and the consociationalist structure has impeded a positive systemic response to them".²⁸ This, however, is somewhat akin to blaming the desert for a flower's failure to take root. While technically valid, the issue may be understood more usefully as the absence of an environment conducive to such growth. Either a more hospitable environment must be cultivated, or more suitable flora planted.

This thesis focuses on the dialectic between Chehabism and Consociationalism; how the two systems obstructed and marginalised one another, with an emphasis on why Chehabism failed. However, it implicitly bears on the corollary issue of why consociationalism failed. For this reason, it is worth briefly reviewing the larger body of work that addresses the latter question. When considering the inherent weaknesses that undermined Lebanon's consociational system, authors typically stress three factors: immobilism, inefficiency, and its tendency to exacerbate social cleavages. It is worth noting that Arend Lijphart, the father of consociational theory, acknowledges all three shortcomings.²⁹ Nonetheless, he believed his consociational model

²⁵ Hudson (1976), pp. 113-114

²⁶ Hudson (1976), pp. 114-15

²⁷ Hudson (1988), p. 234; emphasis in original

²⁸ Hudson (1976), p. 113

²⁹ Lijphart (1977), pp. 50-51

offered the only real chance for deeply-divided societies to achieve stability and democracy, and as such was worth the risks.

According to Simon Haddad, Lebanon's consociational system perpetuated, rather than mitigated, the fundamental problems which stoked the civil war, including

[T]he reinforcement of sectarian identity, the weakening of the state, the proliferation of alternative power centres, the prevalence of the inert nature of government and its failure to absorb new social forces, and the incapacity of this rigid political organisation to adapt to a changing demographic environment.³⁰

In 1966, Shils had warned that Lebanon "must be kept completely still politically" to prevent communal frictions from boiling over into conflict.³¹ Hudson argues that this immobilism "prevented government from dealing with socio-economic and ideological challenges" in the pre-war era.³² Lijphart himself, however, considered such claims to be exaggerated, singling out Shils specifically for criticism. Writing after the outbreak of the civil war, Lijphart continued to insist that "the Lebanese consociational regime established a remarkable – although obviously far from perfect – record of democratic stability".³³ Rather, he maintained, it was "primarily to Lebanon's increasingly unfavourable international environment – combined with the internal flaw of consociational rigidity – that the 1975 breakdown of the democratic regime must be attributed".³⁴

Many Lebanese, of course, have been less satisfied with the consociational political model. Farid el Khazen notes that the model "raises the question of legitimacy and, by extension, the effectiveness of the political system in situations of crisis, particularly when consensus among communal leaders is lacking."³⁵

Both the legitimacy and effectiveness of the elite cartel are likewise questioned by Haddad, who writes, "Consensus ... is confounded with unanimity, contradicting the very essence of democracy and democratic choice".³⁶ For Imad Salamey, these issues logically progress into

³⁰ Haddad (2008), p. 411

³¹ Shils (1966), p. 4

³² Hudson (1988), pp. 228-229

³³ Lijphart (1977), p. 150

³⁴ Lijphart (1977), p. 155

³⁵ Khazen (2000), p. 6

³⁶ Haddad (2008), p. 414

“a self-perpetuating capture of the state by a political sectarian elite that both lacks national accountability and undermines government commitment to the public good”.³⁷

Salamey describes the route from consociationalism to crisis:

The confessional predetermination of state power among many sects, each having veto power over public decisions, undermined the realisation of a functional and strong government system. Instead, a deeply divided and a weak confessional state was established. The immediate result was a spread of social and political insecurity among its citizens, forcing sectarian groups to rely on their own social and security networks, and to look for support beyond Lebanon's borders.³⁸

Recourse to external support, moreover, had the potential to increase the foreign affairs load on the system.

Dekmejian argues that Lebanon's chief problem was that it was never really consociational in the first place, given “its turbulent environment and the related Palestinian issue,”³⁹ a point echoed by Brenda Seaver and Haddad.⁴⁰ Heavy loads on the pre-war Lebanese system, they argue, violated consociationalism's key conditions.⁴¹

However, as we shall see in the following chapter, while a heavy load on the system is a unfavourable factor for consociationalism, it does not inherently alter the system's underlying nature – other than to make positive outcomes less likely. Salamey also sees the regional environment as a disqualifier, though for consociationalism as a normative model: “The viability and stability of a sectarian based consociational state has proven difficult, if not impossible, to be achieved amid the turbulent regional and international political environment.”⁴²

Kabbara's response to consociational theory also merits a brief mention. He reads Lijphart in purely normative terms, and castigates him for “completely disregard[ing]” other means of regulating conflict in plural societies: namely, making them less plural.⁴³ Of course, the entire premise for Lijphart's articulation of the consociational model was to demonstrate that

³⁷ Salamey (2009), p. 84

³⁸ Salamey (2009), p. 84

³⁹ Dekmejian (1975), pp. 260-261

⁴⁰ Seaver (2000), pp. 268-69; Haddad (2008), p. 411

⁴¹ Lijphart (1968), p. 30

⁴² Salamey (2009), p. 94

⁴³ Kabbara (1988), p. 19

countries could find stability and democracy without attempting this daunting task. Kabbara misunderstands Lijphart as actively desiring to increase pluralism through consociationalism.⁴⁴ More justifiably, Kabbara complains that the consociational argument has a “limited and reductionist understanding of the process of formation and deconstruction of social identities and its attempt to fix social differences”.⁴⁵ He continues,

The failure of the theory to acknowledge the presence and importance of the plurality of social and political identities within any social formation and the nature of antagonism that makes certain conflict of identities more dominant in a certain moment... limit the efficiency of the theory and turn it into a mere short term solution to a crisis but ... not a long term system of government.⁴⁶

Kabbara is justified in being sceptical of attempts to “fix” identities into a specific discursive framework, and this may represent a fundamental issue in the implementation of consociationalism.⁴⁷ Yet each of these issues is produced by the ways in which Lebanon diverged from the consociational model laid out by the country’s constitution. Even if meeting the constitutional ideal would have been, as Kabbara convincingly suggests, impossible, it does not undermine the fundamental *descriptive* power of the consociational model for Lebanon’s system. The observation that multiple discursive ‘realities’ exist⁴⁸ transcends the scope of this thesis, which does not argue that consociationalism reflected Lebanon’s ‘true nature’ but rather its constitutional arrangements.

Finally, Kabbara raises important concerns about the consociational model’s implications for Lebanon. If stability is dependent on a balance of power among segments, Kabbara warns, in the case of Lebanon that effectively means that stability is dependent on the interests of the segments’ external benefactors. Significantly, he notes that this dynamic is precisely what spurred the creation of Chehabism in the first place, but he fails to further develop the concept.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Kabbara (1988), p. 19

⁴⁵ Kabbara (1988), p. 31

⁴⁶ Kabbara (1988), pp. 32-33

⁴⁷ Kabbara (1988), p. 33

⁴⁸ Kabbara (1988), pp. 22-23

⁴⁹ Kabbara (1988), p. 27

In English, there are no published scholarly works devoted to Chehab or his policies, other than a short journal article written by Salibi in the early months of the Helou regime in 1964.⁵⁰ Salibi's 1976 *Crossroads to Civil War* also includes several chapters on the era in question.⁵¹ In French, one good biography of Fouad Chehab exists, but its title is indicative of the broader problem: *Fouad Chehab 1902-1973: Une Figure Oubliée de L'Histoire Libanaise* [Fouad Chehab 1902-1973, A Figure Forgotten by Lebanese History].⁵² Malsagne also wrote a French-language paper for the Centre IRFED-Lebret on that organisation's founder, Père Louis-Joseph Lebret, and his influence on Chehabism, but this has not been widely distributed.⁵³ Finally, in French, the work of Eric Verdeil on planning and urbanism in mid-century Lebanon offers solid contributions to our understanding of Lebanon's socio-economic development during the Chehabist era.⁵⁴

Malsagne's reference to a 'forgotten' Chehab echoes the title of one of the few Arabic biographies in print: Bassem al-Jisr's *Fouad Chehab, zalika al-majhoul* [Fouad Chehab, That Unknown One].⁵⁵ In Arabic, Nicolas Nassif has written significant books on both Fouad Chehab himself and his controversial *Deuxième Bureau*.⁵⁶

The widest range of secondary literature on the Chehabist era comes from the era itself. While most of this material is out of print and some wholly inaccessible, Lebanese authors were reasonably prolific in the mid-1960s: Iskandar Bashir's work on administration and civil service reform, Kamal Salibi's writings on administration and politics, and Charles Rizk's treatment of Chehabist politics all deserve mention.⁵⁷ However, these works have the inevitable and rather severe shortcoming of having been written in the middle of the Chehabist story. They consider its institutions through the lens of an uncertain but largely optimistic future, rather than, as we do, through a devastating past. As such, in some cases publications from the period itself are more properly treated as primary sources.

⁵⁰ Salibi (1966)

⁵¹ Salibi (1976)

⁵² Malsagne (2011)

⁵³ Malsagne (2003)

⁵⁴ Verdeil (2009)

⁵⁵ Jisr (2000)

⁵⁶ Nassif (2006); (2008)

⁵⁷ See Bashir (1965); Grassmuck & Salibi (1955); Rizk (1966)

Several theses have considered Chehabism; at the doctoral level, notably the work of Stephane Malsagne and Nawaf Kabbara.⁵⁸ As the best single contribution to the question of why Chehabism failed, Kabbara's 1988 thesis merits a brief discussion.

Kabbara describes Chehabism as "a hegemonic project directed towards the creation of a Lebanese national identity that has failed".⁵⁹ In the end, Kabbara cites three primary reasons for Chehabism's failure: the lack of an appropriate intellectual and political environment in 1960s Lebanon; Chehab's refusal to stand for re-election or to form a political party; and the shift in regional power away from Nasser post-1967.⁶⁰ To an extent, this thesis agrees with all three points – a different, more progressive climate, more forceful Chehabist leadership, and Nasser's continued presence as a domestic and regional stabiliser would each have helped sustain the Chehabist project. However, again, they are not sufficient to explain its collapse.

Kabbara is overly dismissive of the consociational model's relevance to Chehabism. This attitude is partly due to his misreading of Lijphart, but chiefly a production of the circumstances in which he was writing. Kabbara, who is Lebanese, undertook his research in the mid-1980s as civil war continued to ravage Lebanon. For Kabbara, consociationalism was a normative model which many scholars and public figures continued to promote as a solution to the conflict on the basis that sectarianism was Lebanon's essential, immutable characteristic. Kabbara rightly rejected this notion, but he was seemingly unable to disaggregate his scepticism about consociationalism's future in Lebanon from his reading of its past.⁶¹ Consociationalism is not the only possible model for Lebanon, now or after independence. This belief, however, is fully compatible with an acknowledgement that it was – and remains – the constitutional system in place.

Over the following chapters, this thesis will draw upon Kabbara's work. Where it agrees with Kabbara, it is important to note that it does so on the basis of different data. With scant textual or statistical sources available to him at the time, Kabbara's research chiefly involved elite interviews.⁶² Kabbara's access to many of the key figures on both sides of the Chehabist project is both unparalleled and irreplaceable: three decades on, few of these voices can still be heard. Prime Minister Rashid Karami, Kabbara recalls, died just two weeks after their final

⁵⁸ Kabbara (1988); Harb (2007); Malsagne (1992)

⁵⁹ Kabbara (1988), p. 7

⁶⁰ Kabbara (1988), p. 344

⁶¹ Kabbara (1988), p. 21

⁶² Kabbara (1988), p. 4

interview.⁶³ Kabbara's thesis represents a stunning documentation of the Chehabists' legacy, in their own words.

This thesis, on the other hand, relies primarily on archival sources – the majority of which, in Kabbara's time, had yet to be declassified. The fact that some conclusions coincide despite our different primary sources is no less instructive than the fact that others differ.

Beyond Kabbara, the words of several key players from the era are preserved in their autobiographies. President Charles Helou wrote a French-language memoir chronicling his first two years in office.⁶⁴ The memoirs of Lebanese statesman and jurist Fouad Boutros, which were published in both French and Arabic, feature several chapters on his interactions with President Chehab, adding nuance and detail to historical accounts.⁶⁵ Boutros, like Bassem al-Jisr, served as a government minister during Chehab's tenure. The autobiography of Sheikh Najib Alamuddin, former chairman of Lebanon's Middle East Airlines and cabinet minister under Helou, also provides first-hand accounts of key events including the Intra Bank crash of 1966, which receives special treatment in this thesis. On the subject of Intra, one comprehensive Arabic book on the crisis was published recently: Kamal Deeb's *Youssef Beidas: The Intra Empire*.⁶⁶

It is worth noting that none of the books surveyed here could properly be considered as 'histories' of the 1958-1970 era, though several of those mentioned do chronicle it in part. For the purposes of this research, this gap was filled with extensive archival work in both the UK and France, as well as online. Diplomatic archives can be problematic, undercut with biases and ignorance. However, the celebrated Lebanese historian Georges Corm reports being "astonished" by the objectivity, quality, and seriousness of the French, British, and American diplomatic correspondence from the Chehabist era.⁶⁷ I agree with Corm's assessment: the level of professionalism imposed by the embassies, moreover, makes it easy to differentiate opinion from factual record. The quality of these archival sources is attested by their prominent use by nearly all other scholars writing about Lebanon in the 1950s and 1960s over the past 20 years,

⁶³ Kabbara (1988), p. 332

⁶⁴ Helou (1984)

⁶⁵ Boutros (2009)

⁶⁶ Deeb (2014)

⁶⁷ Corm, in his introduction to Malsagne (2011), p. 15

including Adel Beshara, Stephane Malsagne, Nicolas Nassif, Caroline Attie, Irene Gendzier, and others.⁶⁸

The UK National Archives contains a wealth of practically untouched material from the 1960s: Foreign Office documents and communications, labour reports, British Council files, and a treasure trove of miscellanea, including newspaper clippings from Lebanese and foreign papers. The French Diplomatic Archives in Nantes offer a similar range of content, as well as invaluable daily summaries of the Lebanese Arabic-language press. Perhaps most useful of all were the wonderful archives at the now-closed Centre Lebret-IRFED, which held a vast range of documents from their Lebanon mission: publications, treatises, handwritten letters and diagrams, reports, proposals, as well as vast socio-economic data from 1959-60. Indeed, Corm highlighted the IRFED collection as an example of an under-utilised private archive which may be more significant than many public records.⁶⁹

Limited relevant archival material exists in Lebanon. Lebanon's National Archives are in terrible disrepair and contain little material from the period under examination. The army's archive on Chehab consists largely of mundane administrative details and reports on Chehab, but nothing that represents his own views.⁷⁰ Chehab's handful of biographers have all struggled, in particular, to find credible documentation or even reliable accounts of his life before joining the army.⁷¹ However, this obstacle was overcome through access to alternative sources, including official digital archives devoted to Chehab, Michel Chiha, Raymond Edde, and other specific figures and institutions, Lebanese newspaper archives, and copies of official Lebanese documents within the French and British collections. Happily, because the IRFED mission in Lebanon operated from within the Lebanese Ministry of Planning, the Lebret-IRFED archives include significant documentation from that Ministry, much of which has otherwise been lost in the decades since it was shuttered.

Few conclusions can be made about the 'literature' as a corpus in light of the paucity of material on Chehabism and the Chehabist era. Individual authors provide valuable contributions, though almost exclusively within specific niches of the broader subject. The current literature does a capable job explaining the regional and external pressures on Lebanon in the late 1960s. Yet

⁶⁸ See Beshara (2005), Malsagne (2011), Nassif (2008), Attie (2004), Gendzier (1999)

⁶⁹ Corm, in his introduction to Malsagne (2011), pp. 19-20

⁷⁰ See Malsagne (2011), p. 74

⁷¹ See Jisr (2000), Nassif (2008), Malsagne (2011), Kfoury (1980)

internal factors – to the extent they are addressed at all – are rarely placed in the historical narrative beyond their relation to external events. What minimal investigations have taken place into Chehabism's failure tend to focus on Chehab's confrontation with the *zu'ama* and geo-political instability. This project contends that both are insufficient to fully explain why Lebanon became so unstable and fractured, and why this happened when it did.

In order to provide a better answer to the question of why Lebanon declined during a period of ostensible reform, the first and most urgent step is to fill in the historical record of the 1958-70 period so that arguments can be placed in context. This context also helps mitigate the traditional overreliance on external explanatory factors, as it grants access to internal dynamics and thus better insight into causality. In response to this disproportionate emphasis on the external, this thesis will focus on the internal pressures to Lebanon's political system in the 1960s. Of course, the internal and external can only be disaggregated so far, especially in a country like Lebanon which so often serves as a battleground for regional disputes. Nonetheless, this thesis will demonstrate how profoundly vulnerable Lebanon had *already become* by the late 1960s when those external pressures – chief among them those related to the Arab-Israeli conflict – came to bear.

This thesis will provide that historical and analytical context, and thereby help bridge an alarming gap in scholarship on Lebanon that spans the 1960s. It will explain and substantiate the clash between the kind of state implied by Chehabist objectives and the consociational system in place in Lebanon at the time, and show that this conflict has profound explanatory power for Chehabism paradoxical results.

Consequently, this project will make a significant contribution to Lebanese studies. Moreover, the distillation of the case study permits its comparison with reform and state-building elsewhere, which highlights the study's broader thematic relevance. Lebanon, it is argued, may be a stark example of ill-fated state building in a non-Western setting, but its seeming exceptionality makes it what James Ferguson calls a "privileged case", which allows us "to see in stark outline processes that are likely present in less extreme cases".⁷²

Much has been written on the problematic nature of exogenous state-building efforts, particularly since the end of the Cold War. However, much less work has been done on

⁷² Ferguson (1994), p. 258

endogenous peacetime state-building in the developing world. As such this study may also contribute to that literature.

Finally, a note on translation: French and Arabic source material is identified as such in the bibliography, including any titles or file information in the original language. Except where explicitly stated otherwise, all translations from French and Arabic into English are my own.

Research Questions

My research is designed around the broad, central question:

- Why did large-scale efforts by the government to advance unity, social justice, and political stability during Lebanon's Chehabist era (1958-1970) produce antithetical results?

In turn, this core question is informed by several interrelated micro-investigations:

- To what extent did the core principles of Chehabism coincide or clash with the principles of the Consociational Democracy model?
- What role did Fouad Chehab as an individual play in the success or failure of this project?
- What critical internal pressures challenged Lebanon's political stability and democracy during the Chehabist era? How did the government respond?
- What are the implications of the Chehabist experience across other spaces and temporalities, and for state-building efforts generally?

Overview of chapters

This thesis is made up of nine chapters, including an introduction and conclusion. The second half of the current chapter surveys the emergence of Lebanon's political system and political culture, through a review of its pluralist history, the competing nationalisms of the 20th century, and its constitutional documents, the 1926 Constitution with its 1943 amendments, and the 1943 National Pact.

Chapter Two establishes the theoretical framework for this project through a detailed exploration of the consociational democracy model. First, it describes the origins and articulation of consociationalism as a theory. Next, the chapter breaks down how the model works, as well as the conditions under which it is more or less likely to succeed in achieving

stability. It will interrogate consociational democracy's 'democratic' bona fides, and consider the major criticisms levelled against the model which are relevant to this study. Next, the chapter considers how the literature has used the consociational model to describe independence-era Lebanon, as well as alternative readings based on class conflict rather than sect. Next, we present the Chehabist approach to the Lebanese political system. Finally, the chapter identifies a set of 'indicators' to be deployed in later chapters to gauge consociational strength and Chehabist progress.

Chapter Three turns to the other side of the equation and explores the ideological origins and objectives of Chehabism. First, it considers Fouad Chehab personally, looking at his temperament and his experiences as a young man and a soldier. Next, we explore how the dominant ideological currents of the day, as well as the thinking of Father Louis-Joseph Lebret contributed to the development of Chehab's socio-economic and political philosophy. From there, Chapter Three turns its attention to the emergence of Chehabism as a project, articulating its tenets and objectives.

This thesis will then progress with its two sets of indicators and use them to analyse a historical record reconstructed from original research. Chapter Four considers Chehabism's first phase, from Fouad Chehab's election amidst the chaos of the 1958 crisis until his attempted resignation in 1960. This chapter pays special attention to Chehab's reform drive, the IRFED mission in Lebanon and the release of its first report in February 1961. The chapter uses the consociational and Chehabist indicators developed in Chapters Two and Three to explain the 1958 autumn counter-revolution, the perils of 'neutrality with a difference', and the uneasy balance of power between the two systems' imperatives.

Chapter Five proceeds to the second phase of the Chehabist approach, up through the 1964 general elections. The chapter focuses on the abortive coup staged against President Chehab at the end of 1961 and the conditions which precipitated it, the security crackdown that ensued, and the rise of an empowered Deuxième Bureau. As Chehabism assumes a more authoritarian mantle and reforms come into force, our indicators reveal the pressures building on the consociational-democratic system.

Chapter Six moves on to the final phase of Chehabism as an active political project, from the election of Chehab's successor in 1964 until the eve of Lebanon's financial crisis. The chapter will focus on the acrimonious nature of the campaign to get Chehab reelected (in spite of his refusals), the eleventh-hour agreement on Charles Helou as a candidate, and the ossification of divisions that would poison Helou's reign. Both the Chehabist and consociational models suffer

as the Chehabists unwittingly relinquish control; new, non-sectarian rifts fracture the parliament; and Helou embarks on a personal vendetta with his infamous purge.

Chapter Seven examines Chehabism's fall from the Lebanese political scene, which culminated in the Chehabists' disintegration after the 1968 parliamentary elections. It looks closely at the catastrophic fall of Lebanon's Intra Bank in October 1966: How and why the region's largest bank was allowed to fail, as well as the repercussions of that event. This thesis makes the case that the Intra crisis was the culmination of the conflict between the Chehabist and consociational political systems, and in turn laid waste to both.

In the Conclusion, we revisit the achievements and failures generated by its clash with consociationalism, to understand why Chehabism is best understood as a revolutionary political project, rather than one of reform. Finally, we consider the implications of the Chehabist project for reform in present day Lebanon.

Lebanon's Political Tradition

Origins of the Lebanese system

'Lebanon', like 'Syria', traces to antiquity as a geographical reference within *bilad al-sham* but not as a polity of its own.⁷³ The subject of Lebanon's vintage as a political entity has implications for national identity, as well as the depth of its political culture. Lebanon's National Pact, which introduced the consociational system in 1943, was a product of warring Lebanese and Arab Nationalisms – as was the 1958 crisis which brought General Fouad Chehab to power. Historian Albert Hourani's account of the diversity of Lebanese views on "the nature of Lebanon" illustrates the existential stakes at play:

These conceptions are often expressed in the form of historical or ethnological answers to the question whether the Lebanese are or are not Arabs ... At the basis of them... there is a view of the function which Lebanon should perform, an answer to the question of what her relations should be with the West and with the Arabs.⁷⁴

If on one end of the spectrum, some claim a 'Lebanese' identity dating back to ancient Phoenicia (or even further),⁷⁵ at the other extreme are those who cast *Grand-Liban's* establishment after the First World War as a wholly artificial, colonial project.⁷⁶ In addition to ethnic differentiation, Kamal Salibi explains that the appeal to ancient history was used to legitimate Greater Lebanon as an independent entity through an "illustrious pre-Arab antiquity".⁷⁷

Carole Hakim laments that "this controversy has clouded the historiography of Lebanese nationalism", as too many scholars ignore alternative accounts.⁷⁸ Ussama Makdisi is particularly scathing on teleological approaches which uncritically present the Western nation-state "as the culmination of history".⁷⁹ He is critical of the class of Lebanese scholars, including Philip Hitti and Salibi, who seemed to embrace this idea in their writing, with a narrative of primordial sectarian hatreds thwarting Lebanon's ascent to modernity.⁸⁰

⁷³ Salibi (1988), pp. 62-64; Harik (1990), p. 20

⁷⁴ Hourani (1946), p. 133

⁷⁵ Salibi (1988), pp. 170-171

⁷⁶ Firro (2003), p. 39

⁷⁷ Salibi (1988), pp. 170-71

⁷⁸ Hakim (2013), p. 261

⁷⁹ Makdisi (2000), p. 166

⁸⁰ Makdisi (2000), pp. 173-174

Historian Abdul-Rahim Abu Husayn, based on extensive research in the archives of the Ottoman Register of Public Affairs, makes the case that the paucity of early documentation is itself evidence that “the territory today known as Lebanon did not constitute an historical unit on its own, but was divided between the different provinces of Ottoman Syria” before the early eighteenth century.⁸¹ Abu Husayn argues that a Lebanese polity emerged no earlier than 1711, when the Shihabi emirs “regularised” governance across Mount Lebanon.⁸²

Significantly, the eighteenth century postdates the reign of Lebanese national hero Fakhreddine II and challenges the popular belief that a recognisable Lebanese polity emerged under the Shihabs’ Maani predecessors or even earlier.⁸³ The notion of a united Mount Lebanon under the Maans, though “not historically true”, “has been the main thesis of Lebanese national ideology to this day.”⁸⁴

The Iqta’ System and the Double Qa’imaqamiya

At the turn of the eighteenth century, Mount Lebanon was a poor, sparsely populated, and loosely administered principality within the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the reorganisation of the Ottoman *iqta’* system during the Shihabi emirate (1697-1842) was a key phase in Lebanon’s political evolution.⁸⁵ Hourani writes, “If we want a symbolic date for the emergence of Lebanon, it might be 1697”, the year when the Maans were replaced as emirs of Mount Lebanon by the Shihabs.⁸⁶

Briefly, the *iqta’* system placed parcels of land in the hands of local leaders (*muqati’jis*) to be worked by peasants and sharecroppers. These territories fell within the broader concession granted by the Sublime Porte to the ‘prince’ of Mount Lebanon, the *Emir al-Hakim*, and his ruling dynasty. The emir’s primary role was to ensure that taxes and loyalty were delivered to the Sultan and to guarantee the emirate’s sovereignty within the Ottoman Empire, repelling attacks and incursions by neighbouring lords.⁸⁷ Although the *iqta’* system was created as a tax-farming arrangement, with more autonomy it came to structure not just economic but also

⁸¹ Abu Husayn (2004), p. 1

⁸² Abu Husayn (2004), pp. 1-2

⁸³ Salibi (1988), p.126-127; Abou Nohra (1988), p. 32; Cobban (1985), p. 77

⁸⁴ Harik (1966), p. 42

⁸⁵ Hottinger (1966), pp. 86-87; also see Harik (1965) and Harik (1966)

⁸⁶ Hourani (1985), p. 8

⁸⁷ Harik (1965), pp. 417-18

social and political relations between classes and sects in Mount Lebanon.⁸⁸ The *muqati'jis* were the primary source of security and justice within the emirate, with coercive power vested at the local level rather than in the central government.⁸⁹

According to Khazen, “the elimination of the *iqta'* system in the 1860s did not really terminate the *iqta'* approach to communal politics”; rather, post-feudal *muqati'jis* maintained their relevance after the emirate by evolving into modern *zu'ama*.⁹⁰ Arnold Hottinger explains how this process unfolded:

... Under the special conditions of Lebanon, the feudal relationship had developed into an organic institution whose utility was not exhausted when the military function of the za'im became obsolete. Buttressed by private property and by administrative office, as he had once been sustained by the delegated “feudal” authority of the state, the za'im continues to fulfil social and political functions similar to those of his ancestors.⁹¹

Hottinger stresses the role of both as intermediaries between their clients and the government, and as keepers of the peace: “The zu'ama' still speak for “their” community; they still mediate between this community and the alien outside world – at first the Turkish government, then later the European powers ... eventually the national central government of Beirut”.⁹²

The *iqta'* system was characterised by non-sectarian structures of allegiance. A key element in both social and political structure was *'asabiyya*, group solidarity built on “kinship ties, real or imagined”.⁹³ The most salient social divisions followed the ancient tribal Qayssi and Yamani lines, which transcended sect.⁹⁴ Subjects' roles and identities were chiefly defined by their *muqati'ji*'s house and status, but – for Christian and Muslim, if not Druze subjects – loyalty was based along territorial rather than confessional lines.⁹⁵

In the final years of the emirate, the Porte actively cultivated sectarian animosities in a bid to replace the Mountain's traditional autonomy with direct Ottoman rule.⁹⁶ These tensions fed into vicious Druze-Christian clashes in 1841. In response, the Ottomans in concert with the

⁸⁸ Harik (1965), p. 413

⁸⁹ Harik (1965), p. 410

⁹⁰ Khazen (2000), p. 51

⁹¹ Hottinger (1966), p. 91

⁹² Hottinger (1966), p. 89-91

⁹³ Hakim (2013), p. 261

⁹⁴ Hourani (1946), p.25

⁹⁵ Harik (1965), p. 411

⁹⁶ Hourani (1946), p. 31

Great Powers abandoned the emirate, dividing Mount Lebanon into two *qa'imaqamiyas* or administrative districts, with one district administered by a Maronite and the other by a Druze.⁹⁷ The Ottomans transferred many of the traditional prerogatives of the *muqati'jis* to a council that included representatives of the major sects.⁹⁸ This formalisation of political order coincided with broader administrative reforms and centralisation efforts by the Porte as part of the Ottoman *tanzimat*, which lasted from 1839-76.⁹⁹ However, these changes, coupled with extensive external meddling by the Turks and the Great Powers, ultimately ignited confessional and class animosities in Mount Lebanon.¹⁰⁰ Abou Nohra notes how the Porte, which created the dual *qa'imaqamiyya* to regain control and reduce unrest, ultimately came to see the system as little more than an “organised civil war”.¹⁰¹ Following the dual *qa'imaqamiya*'s bloody crescendo in 1860, European powers intervened to demand the Ottoman government grant autonomy to Mount Lebanon within the empire.

The Mutasarrifiya

The autonomous *mutasarrifiya* or ‘governorate’ of Mount Lebanon was created¹⁰² in response to the brutal sectarian clashes across the Mountain in 1860. The *mutasarrifiya* would survive until the outbreak of the First World War, and it coincided with the longest peace enjoyed in Lebanon’s modern history. Its founding document, the 1861 *Règlement Organique* (replaced in 1864 by an updated document of the same name) was Lebanon’s first constitutional text and introduced its first representative government, albeit one whose powers were circumscribed. Abou Nohra describes the *Règlement* as a mutual compromise which granted the Maronites Lebanon’s unity and autonomy, but the choice of governor to the Porte; to the Druze, the prize was the exclusion of Maronites from that highest office.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Salibi (1965), p. 63

⁹⁸ Salibi (1965), pp.71-72

⁹⁹ Salibi (1965), p. 73

¹⁰⁰ Salibi (1965), p. 80

¹⁰¹ Abou Nohra (1988), p. 44

¹⁰² Signatories to Lebanon’s *Règlement Organique* included France, Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and the Ottomans (and later Italy)

¹⁰³ Abou Nohra (1988), p. 45

Under the terms of the agreement, Mount Lebanon would be autonomous, but governed by a non-Lebanese Ottoman Christian *mutasarraf*, or governor, who was assisted by an elected local administrative council.¹⁰⁴ Hourani describes the system imposed by the *Règlement*:

[The Mutasarrif] was to have full executive powers and to be assisted by a central administrative Council, on which the more important religious communities were to be equitably represented. They were similarly to be represented in the local administration. Lebanon was to have its own judiciary and police force. Feudal privileges were abolished, and all were declared equal before the law.¹⁰⁵

In time, the administrative council assumed a strong legislative role “akin to that of an assembly, at the hub of Mount Lebanon’s governmental structure. To many... it appeared that Lebanon was only one step from becoming an independent state”.¹⁰⁶

Religious identification had risen with the clashes of the mid-nineteenth century, but structuring representation along confessional lines granted sects a new relevance in the *mutasarrifiya*. Accordingly, Burke describes Lebanese sectarianism as a construct only politicised during this period: “...religious ethnicity became a key marker in the nineteenth century primarily as a result of the kind of state that was created and how it came about”.¹⁰⁷ This point is emphatically supported by Lebanese historian and politician Georges Corm.¹⁰⁸ Lebanese historian Ussama Makdisi also locates the invention of Lebanese sectarianism in the conflict that preceded the *mutasarrifiya* and its specific historical context.¹⁰⁹ He writes,

... Sectarianism is a modernist knowledge in the sense that it was produced in the context of European hegemony and Ottoman reforms and because its articulators at a colonial (European), imperial (Ottoman), and local (Lebanese) level regarded themselves as moderns who used the historical past to justify present claims and future development.¹¹⁰

One strategy employed by *mutasarrafs* to keep the former feudal chiefs in line was to integrate them into Mount Lebanon’s government and administration.¹¹¹ As Burke explains,

¹⁰⁴ Salibi (1965), p. 109-110

¹⁰⁵ Hourani (1946), p. 31

¹⁰⁶ Akarli (1988), p. 95

¹⁰⁷ Burke (1988), p. 27

¹⁰⁸ Corm (2012), pp. 30-31

¹⁰⁹ Makdisi (2000), pp. 6-7

¹¹⁰ Makdisi (2000), p. 7

¹¹¹ Salibi (1965), p. 112

Although the 1858 *thawra* overturned feudalism in its administrative/juridical forms, it left intact the social and economic power of the great families in most of Lebanon... In the ensuing compromise, the control over the means of violence in the countryside remained in their hands.¹¹²

Over time, many Christians grew dissatisfied with *mutasarrifiya*, resenting the imposition of a non-Lebanese *mutasarraf* as well as “the reduction of Lebanese territory, and insisted on the reintegration in Lebanon of the Biqa’, Beirut, and the regions of Tripoli and Sidon”.¹¹³ This expanded view of Lebanon, which corresponds with the country’s modern borders, is ubiquitous in early twentieth century writings, as well as military maps drawn during the French intervention in the early 1860s.¹¹⁴ In 1853, Colonel Charles Henry Churchill wrote of the future Lebanese state,

When Mount Lebanon ceases to be Turkish, it must either become English or else form part of a new independent State which, without the incentive to territorial aggrandisement, or the means of military aggression, shall yet be able to maintain its own honour and dignity and more especially to promote the great object for which it will be called into existence, for which indeed by its geographical position it will be so eminently qualified; that of creating, developing and upholding a commercial intercourse in the East, which shall draw together and unite the hitherto divergent races of mankind.¹¹⁵

‘Uniting mankind’ may be ambitious, yet Churchill’s vision was very much in line with the daydreams of an emergent Lebanese nationalism.

Lebanism & Arabism

In the late nineteenth century, an Arabic literary and cultural renaissance nurtured a fresh generation of Levantine intellectuals and a renewed sense of Arab pride.¹¹⁶ This awareness of an Arab identity was amplified by a concurrent surge in Turkish nationalism at the centre of the Ottoman Empire. Whereas previously, Sunni Arabs had belonged to the dominant group

¹¹² Burke (1988), p. 24

¹¹³ Salibi (1965), p. 118

¹¹⁴ Firro (2003), p. 18

¹¹⁵ Crosthwaite to Earl of Home, *Valedictory Despatch*, 1 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/5

¹¹⁶ Hourani (1946), p. 101

based on religion, now they were outsiders on the basis of ethnicity.¹¹⁷ Hakim describes how both forms of nationalism “emerged and involved in tandem against the background of profound social, economic and political transformations wrought by the reformation of the Ottoman state”.¹¹⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, both Lebanese nationalism, or Lebanism, and Arab nationalism had emerged as coherent political ideologies in the *mutasarrifiya*.

A turning point for both ideologies came with the rise of the Young Turks in 1908. The new Ottoman regime made its Arab subjects uneasy, as they saw that “the centralisation of the Ottoman Empire...was henceforth to be accompanied by an attempt at the deliberate Turkification of all Ottoman peoples, Moslems and non-Moslems alike”.¹¹⁹ The Young Turks’ policies catalysed the spread of Lebanism and Arab Nationalism.¹²⁰

In 1915, in the midst of a world war, the Ottomans abruptly stripped the *mutasarrifiya* of its autonomous status. Although the fighting did not reach Lebanon, the next four years were characterised by famine, atrocity, mass conscription and increasingly harsh repression under direct Ottoman rule. In 1916, the Ottoman Governor in Beirut publicly executed 21 Christian and Muslim nationalist ‘traitors’, and banished many more into exile.¹²¹

Lebanism

In 1909, Lebanese nationalists at home and in the diaspora set up a raft of organisations with a similar mission – to articulate and disseminate a Lebanist ideology, in defence of Lebanon’s autonomy (if not independence) and its special character.¹²²

The keystone of all forms of Lebanese nationalism, or Lebanism, was the belief Lebanon had a special character and should exist as an autonomous entity separate from the other Arab nations. Early writers, such as Maronite intellectual Paul Noujaim (who wrote under the anagrammed *nom-de-guerre* M. Jouplain), did not necessarily conceptualise Lebanon as an independent state *per se*. Rather, Noujaim’s focus was on Lebanon as a *nation*, which deserved autonomy and liberty within the broader *Ottoman* state. Noujaim envisioned an Ottoman Empire one day transformed into a “federated state, with partial administrative autonomy for

¹¹⁷ Harik (1990), p. 17

¹¹⁸ Hakim (2013), p. 263

¹¹⁹ Salibi (1965), p. 156

¹²⁰ Hartman and Olsaretti (2003), p. 39

¹²¹ Hakim (2013), p. 223

¹²² Hakim (2013), pp. 207-211

the different nations that comprise it”.¹²³ The priority for Noujaim was the extension of an autonomous Lebanon’s borders to include those territories ‘stolen’ from it in 1861.¹²⁴

With the Ottoman Empire’s collapse and Greater Lebanon’s constitution as a ‘state’ in 1920, Lebanist characterisations of Lebanon adapted accordingly; Firro notes the conspicuous disappearance of the term ‘Syria’ from Lebanist tracts.¹²⁵ Much of the Lebanist ideology was passed along intact, with ‘the state’ simply substituted for ‘the nation’.

The transition was less seamless for those with unfavourable views of the new status quo. For Arab nationalists in particular, this was the moment of original sin: As Carol Hakim observes, they “tended to write off Lebanese nationalist aspirations prior to the establishment of the Lebanese state and to attribute the emergence of the country as part of a French scheme to thwart and contain genuine Arab historical nationalist aspirations”.¹²⁶

Arabism

Avi Shlaim’s account, while somewhat ahistorical, does mirror the mainstream Arabist perception of the post-Ottoman status quo:

In the war’s aftermath, [Britain and France] refashioned the Middle East in their own image, building a new political and territorial order on the ruins of the old. They created states, they nominated persons to govern them, and they laid down frontiers between them. But most of the new states were weak and unstable, the rulers lacked legitimacy, and the frontiers were arbitrary, illogical, and unjust, giving rise to powerful irredentist tendencies.¹²⁷

Arab Nationalists in Lebanon were by no means uniformly Muslim, but most Lebanese Sunnis at the time subscribed to the philosophy. Arab Nationalists desired a single, unified Arab state, as “they were vividly aware that there had been a time when the Arabs had been conscious of themselves as a special community, and as a community had played a leading part in

¹²³ Noujaim (1908), p. 590 (translation mine)

¹²⁴ Noujaim (1908), p. 572

¹²⁵ Firro (2003), p. 25

¹²⁶ Hakim (2013), p. 261

¹²⁷ Shlaim (1995), pp. 16-17

history.”¹²⁸ After centuries of suppression and division, Arab nationalists believed unity could empower the Arab peoples to reprise that leading role.

Arab nationalists saw the unification of the Arabs as the best means to preserve their heritage while moving forward into an uncertain modern age. Politically, they sought to cultivate an Arab consciousness, liberate “all Arab lands” and establish “some degree of unity between them”.¹²⁹ But as vital as these ambitions were, as Hourani observed in 1946, “of all the factors which have stimulated the sense of Arab unity in the past twenty years, the most important has been the struggle of the Palestinian Arabs against Zionism”.¹³⁰

Clashing national ideas

By most accounts, conflict between Arab Nationalism and Lebanism only came to the fore in the interregnum between Ottoman rule and the mandate. With the collapse of the Empire in 1918, Lebanon – after one dramatic week of Sharifian Arab rule in October of that year – was officially placed under the custodianship of the Allied Forces. During the period of military administration, the Maronites successfully lobbied the French to support their bid for a Christian homeland in the Middle East. In 1920, French forces proclaimed the State of Greater Lebanon, which annexed territories adjacent to the *mutasarrifiya* over the protests of their inhabitants.¹³¹

The Arab nationalists did not object to a state based on the *mutasarrifiya* itself: indeed, Sharif Husayn’s son Faysal accepted the premise at the Peace Conference in Versailles in 1919, on the condition that Lebanon remain in economic union with a unified Arab state.¹³² However, they were strongly opposed to Greater Lebanon’s annexation of these ‘disputed territories’.¹³³ For the Sunni coastal elite, at issue were not just separation from their brethren and hopes for an Arab monarchy, but also economic concerns: international borders now separated them from primary markets in the Syrian interior.¹³⁴

From 1925 - 1936, Greater Lebanon was one of four ‘Levantine States’ under French mandatory power alongside Syria, an Alawi state centred in Lattakia, and Jabal Druze. The

¹²⁸ Hourani (1946), p. 101

¹²⁹ Hourani (1946), p. 101

¹³⁰ Hourani (1946), p. 106

¹³¹ Johnson (1986), p. 23

¹³² Hourani (1946), p. 51

¹³³ Solh (2004), p. 1

¹³⁴ Johnson (1986), p. 23

latter two were folded into the Syrian state in 1936; despite French flirtations with transferring some of Lebanon's territories to Greater Syria during the revolts of the mid-1920s,¹³⁵ Lebanon endured in its present borders.

The League of Nations mandates were meant to provide an incubatory period for the new countries to prepare for their eventual independence. However, the terms of the mandate spelled out far greater authority for France in Lebanon's governance.¹³⁶ A French High Commissioner, based in Beirut, administered the mandate in both Syria and Greater Lebanon. From 1920 until the passage of Lebanon's 1926 Constitution, a French governor ruled Greater Lebanon alongside an appointed advisory council whose members were selected from the major confessional groupings. In 1922, an elected Representative Council was added.¹³⁷ A formal system based on proportional confessional representation was inaugurated with the first Council elections, with Lebanon divided into districts corresponding to the six governorates of Beirut, Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon, Bekaa, Nabitiye, and South Lebanon. The French mandatory powers were widely criticised for excessive meddling in the electoral process.¹³⁸

Bou-Nacklie observes that the French used sectarian distribution within the various Lebanese institutions as a balancing mechanism, to keep certain groups from gaining excessive power.¹³⁹ Despite any good that may have come from the mandate, N. Ziadeh does not equivocate:

French policy in Syria and Lebanon was not in the interest of the people. In Lebanon it emphasised the 'confessional' nature of the 'State', and thus succeeded in creating a diversity of interests which drove people into enclaves.¹⁴⁰

Religion, ironically, was one of the only realms where control was delegated to local authorities. Article Nine of the Mandate, for example, bars the Mandatory from interfering with the management of religious communities; Article Ten limits mandatory control over religious missions "to the maintenance of public order and good government".¹⁴¹ Although the Ottomans had taken a similar legal approach, within Islam they only had recognised Sunnism – meaning the Shia community in Lebanon had been judged by Sunni courts, and effectively

¹³⁵ Firro (2003), p. 79

¹³⁶ French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon

¹³⁷ Salibi (1965), pp. 164-165

¹³⁸ Firro (2003), p. 77-78

¹³⁹ Bou-Nacklie (1993), p. 656

¹⁴⁰ N. Ziadeh (1957), p. 50

¹⁴¹ French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon

disenfranchised.¹⁴² The mandate placed all sects on equal legal footing with Sunnis “for the first time in many centuries”.¹⁴³

Yet even Christian dissatisfaction with the mandate rose alongside the costs of bad French economic policy as well as their curbing of Lebanese civil liberties.¹⁴⁴ A falling out in the mid-1930s between the Maronite Patriarchate and the French High Commissioner softened Maronite positions towards Syria while hardening their view of the French, who were seen as exploiting their power.¹⁴⁵ Increasingly, Maronite support was linked to demands for immediate independence.

Greater Lebanon’s Sunni leaders clung to the goal of Arab unity, but following the 1936 Conference of the Coast two distinct strategies crystallised within their ranks: while some continued to seek immediate unification, a small contingent among the Sunni elite began to see Arabism as a long game that could best be won by getting their domestic affairs in order first.¹⁴⁶ Khazen describes the dilemma as expressed by Kazem al-Solh, a leading proponent of the latter view:

...The problem was: either creating a country in union with Syria and alienating half the population, or leaving Mount Lebanon outside a united Greater Syria thereby inducing the Christians to seek protection and surrender to colonial domination. In the latter scenario Mount Lebanon would become a ‘French province’, that is, a centre of subversion against the Arab nation.¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, as Sunni economic and political interests converged with those of other Lebanese sects, communal coexistence muted concerns among the elite.¹⁴⁸ Much as the *mutassarifs* used the advantages of public office to lure the former *muqati’jis* into tacit acceptance of the status quo, the promise of patronage – and threat of losing it to rivals – brought some Sunnis and other Lebanon-sceptics into the administration.

A key shift in Arab Nationalist positioning came in 1943, as several major Maronite factions – the Kataeb and Destour Party most notably – moved to support Arabist demands for the end of

¹⁴² Weiss (2010), pp. 707-708

¹⁴³ Hourani (1946), pp.174-175

¹⁴⁴ Solh (2004), pp. 34-35

¹⁴⁵ Khazen (1991), pp. 8-9

¹⁴⁶ Khazen (1991) pp. 13-14

¹⁴⁷ Khazen (1991) p. 14

¹⁴⁸ Atiyah (1973), p. 326

the Mandate. This newfound solidarity made the idea of a mutual compromise seem achievable.¹⁴⁹ In the summer of 1943, internal pressures, along with the interference of external actors – Syria, Egypt and Britain chief among them – finally brought together Maronite Bechara al-Khoury and Sunni Riad al-Solh to negotiate a National Pact.¹⁵⁰

Yet from the beginning, accepting Lebanon as a state had been one thing; accepting the proposition that Lebanon itself could be a nation was another. Lebanon's ideological divide complicated the task of building a constitutional structure. So, as Sunnis and other non-Maronites "began to come around to the idea of Greater Lebanon as a territorial state, this only intensified the debate among them as to what the defining national features of that state ought to be".¹⁵¹

Lebanon's Constitutional Documents

In his indispensable annotations to the Lebanese constitution, Bechara Menassa reflects on the uncommon durability of Lebanon's constitutional framework, which has been altered but never replaced since its original promulgation in 1926. He suggests that this "unstable equilibrium" is produced by the give-and-take between Lebanon's constitutional documents, the written Constitution and the unwritten National Pact: as the former pulls politics towards Western democratic norms, the latter corrects with "the imperatives of our communal coexistence".¹⁵²

Among the most influential figures behind the 1926 constitution was Michel Chiha, a banker-cum-intellectual who inspired much of Lebanon's political philosophy. Chiha sought to reconcile Lebanon's warring nationalisms, and to expand the narrow, Christian-oriented Lebanism to envelop other communities through Lebanon's identification as a cosmopolitan, laissez-faire 'mercantile society'.¹⁵³ Accordingly, "Chiha portrayed Lebanon not only as an inclusive project that would protect all of its "minority" groups, but he presented the protection and inclusion of these groups as a definition and moral reason for Lebanon's existence".¹⁵⁴ Kliot argues that, as such, the constitution represented the first "political compromise among

¹⁴⁹ Menassa (2010), p.p. 44-45

¹⁵⁰ Khazen (1991) pp. 17-19

¹⁵¹ Firro (2003), p. 67

¹⁵² Menassa (2010), p. 32

¹⁵³ Firro (2003), pp. 30-32; 34-36

¹⁵⁴ Hartman and Olsaretti (2003), p. 49

the various “state-ideas” of Lebanon”.¹⁵⁵ Rondot offers a good (albeit idealised) summary of the nature of this constitutional compromise:

The Lebanese State, expanded in 1920, since then has gathered together around a dozen Muslim and Christian communities, spurred into mutual understanding at once by this tradition of association, by the fact that no one among them holds the numerical majority, and by their common desire to live in an independent national setting where their balance can be safeguarded under the rubric of a perfect mutual tolerance.

Founded on such bases, the Lebanese State had been led to give itself, in practice even more than on paper, an original Constitution. The essential principle of its institutions rests in the sharing of public offices, such as the responsibilities of the State, among the diverse communities, pro rata according to the number of their adherents.¹⁵⁶

Meir Zamir describes the mandate period as “formative for the Lebanese state, determining its independence as a distinct entity, defining its borders, shaping its unique political system and capitalist laissez-faire economy”.¹⁵⁷ He suggests that during the period from 1926 to the outbreak of the Second World War, the goal was “to form a nation-state based on the Western concept of parliamentary democracy, within a society divided along national, religious and sectarian lines”.¹⁵⁸

The 1926 Constitution

Lebanon’s first constitution was promulgated in May 1926 through the cooperation of the mandatory authorities, French jurists, and a Lebanese drafting commission. It was modelled after the French constitution of 1875, along with earlier Belgian and Egyptian statutes.¹⁵⁹ In addition to these foreign influences, Nicola Ziadeh observes, the *mutasarrifiya* also left its mark:

¹⁵⁵ Kliot (1986), p. 4

¹⁵⁶ Rondot (1957), pp. 659-60 (translation mine)

¹⁵⁷ Meir (2000), p. ix

¹⁵⁸ Meir (2000), p. x

¹⁵⁹ Firro (2003), p. 33

There is no doubt that when the [1926 constitution] for Lebanon was being drafted ... the traditions of the second half of the nineteenth century were not only allowed to be upheld, but were permitted to establish themselves permanently in the minds of the people.¹⁶⁰

The 1926 Constitution added structure and detail to the mandatory system. Firstly, it created a bicameral legislature including an elected Chamber of Deputies and an appointed Senate. The two chambers were subsequently merged in 1927, as the bicameral system was deemed “too elaborate” for such a small country.¹⁶¹

Of course, the Constitution reaffirmed expansive mandatory powers over Lebanon (these articles were abolished with independence in 1943). Yet with no sense of irony, it laid a strong emphasis on the principles of democracy and liberty. Menassa explains this emphasis was partly a fortification against a regional wave of *coups d'état*. It also offered reassurance to other sects that Greater Lebanon would not be a resurrection of the Maronite emirate.¹⁶² In any case, the Constitution's preamble declared that,

Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic based on respect for public liberties, especially the freedom of opinion and belief, and respect for social justice and equality of rights and duties among all citizens without discrimination.¹⁶³

As Menassa notes, this statement is plainly false, given that personal status laws are dictated by sect: Lebanese have different fundamental rights in areas of inheritance, divorce, and different representation in the parliament on the basis of their religion.¹⁶⁴

It also institutionalised political sectarianism, through the perennially ‘temporary’ Article 95, which reads as follows:

On a transitional basis and in accordance with the first article of Mandate Charter, and with the intention of promoting fairness and harmony, the [sectarian] communities will be equitably represented in the public service and in the formation of governments, except where to do so would damage the well-being of the State.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ N. Ziadeh (1957), pp. 175-176

¹⁶¹ Salibi (1965), p. 168

¹⁶² Menassa (2010), p.19

¹⁶³ Lebanese Constitution, Preamble, Paragraph C

¹⁶⁴ Menassa (2010), p.48

¹⁶⁵ Menassa (2010), p. 419 – Original 1926 text of Article 95, translation mine

With no precedent in foreign statutes, Article 95 was one of the articles that had to be written from scratch, and its wording was the subject of much debate in the new chamber.¹⁶⁶ Menassa notes that Muslims on the Representative Council were just as amenable as the Christians to Article 95, as it helped consolidate and protect their communities' power under the mandate.¹⁶⁷ Around the time of independence, interestingly, Chiha on several occasions noted his discomfit with with a political system tied to confession, "which he recalled had led to failure and even the need for European intervention".¹⁶⁸

While the constitution called for equitable sectarian representation, it made no mention of the ratio by which positions should be distributed. Neither did it specify a religion for Lebanon's president, although in practice, the French insisted on Christians filling the role. Indeed, the first suspension of the Constitution by mandatory powers came in response to Lebanese attempts to install a Sunni President.

In effect, from 1926 - 1990, the Lebanese Constitution "consecrated a Christian superiority, under various guises, in all the institutions of state".¹⁶⁹

The National Pact

At the height of the Second World War in 1941, Free France's representative in Syria and Lebanon General Catroux declared both countries' independence from the Mandate.¹⁷⁰ Yet despite this official declaration, the French procrastinated handing over power or even reinstating the constitution, which they had suspended several years prior.¹⁷¹

Then in 1943, reasonably fair elections granted a parliamentary majority to Bechara al-Khoury's Constitutional Bloc, which for several years had been engaged in discussions on independence with members of the leading Sunni al-Solh family.¹⁷² Khoury ascended to the presidency, appointed Riad al-Solh as prime minister, and called upon him to form a government. The French resisted the new government's moves to abrogate the Mandate, and threw Khoury, Solh, and their new ministers in prison. In response, the country's major Christian and Muslim factions joined forces to organise a nationwide strike. The prisoners were

¹⁶⁶ Menassa (2010), p.20

¹⁶⁷ Menassa (2010), pp. 422-23

¹⁶⁸ Gendzier (1999), p. 51

¹⁶⁹ Menassa (2010), p. 30

¹⁷⁰ Hourani (1946), pp. 241-242; p. 371

¹⁷¹ Hourani (1946), p. 253

¹⁷² Salibi (1968), p. 187-88

released from Rachayya Castle on 22 November 1943, and over the next two months the French grudgingly transferred power to the Lebanese.¹⁷³

The *modus vivendi* reached by Khoury and Solh in their consultations became known as the National Pact. The Pact built on the 1926 Constitution to formalise Lebanon's confessional political system and outlook. The purpose of the 1943 National Pact was to address the dilemma presented by Lebanon's competing and incompatible nationalisms, Lebanism and Arabism, and their respective visions for the country.

Despite the part outsiders played in brokering the Pact, Hanna Ziadeh argues it was a milestone in Lebanese autonomy:

For the first time in its modern history Lebanon's independence was guaranteed not by the authority, sovereignty or Mandate of a single or group of non-Lebanese powers, but through its integration into a regional political and security system, in which it enjoyed a privileged role.¹⁷⁴

As an unwritten accord, much of what we know about the contents of the National Pact derives from the Ministerial Statement read by Prime Minister Solh in Parliament in November 1943. That text identified Lebanon as a sovereign, independent nation "with an Arab face", but one which also "accepts what is useful and beneficial from Western civilisation".¹⁷⁵ This famous phrase was a Sunni-Christian compromise on foreign policy with profound domestic repercussions: the Lebanese would lean neither to the East nor to the West, but treat and cooperate with both from a position of neutrality.¹⁷⁶ Salibi recounts the argument – advanced chiefly by Christians – that,

[T]he Lebanese Republic under the National Pact was actually a secular state. In every other Arab country ... Islam was pronounced by a special article of the constitution to be the state religion, or at least the religion of the chief of state. Only Lebanon had no state religion...¹⁷⁷

In terms of internal arrangements, the key outcome of the Pact was the confirmation of a 6:5 Christian-Muslim ratio in the distribution of political and administrative posts, supposedly

¹⁷³ Salibi (1968), p. 187-88

¹⁷⁴ H. Ziadeh (2006), p. 120

¹⁷⁵ "At-ta'awon ma' ad-doul al-arabiya al-majawira", *Al-Bayan al-Wizari*, Government of Riad al-Solh, 5 November 1943; reproduced in Ziadeh (2006), p. 278

¹⁷⁶ H. Ziadeh (2006), p. 116

¹⁷⁷ Salibi (2003), p. 197

reflecting the results of the 1932 census. It also allocated the ‘three presidencies’ of President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of Parliament to the Maronites, Sunni, and Shia respectively. From then on, the Pact’s terms would be “reproduced in almost every presidential election, and after major crises, albeit with different actors and under different regional and international circumstances”.¹⁷⁸

The National Pact established a *de jure* consociational system in Lebanon.¹⁷⁹ However, it was also a consociational act *par excellence*.

The Lebanese Approach

If the National Pact was a means to manage Lebanon’s clashing ideologies, it did not dictate specific policy approaches for the newly independent state. Lebanon mined its past for a national identity that could appeal across sectarian lines. In the late 1940s, Hourani wrote of Lebanon’s longstanding “specific tradition” of asylum – peaceful coexistence, if not tolerance – and autonomy. He conceded that the territory had seen its share of civil conflict, but insisted that even ostensibly sectarian feuds were mostly caused by socio-political issues, “the strife of factions and families”.¹⁸⁰

Gabriel Menassa, a lawyer and economist at the heart of Lebanon’s political aristocracy,¹⁸¹ saw three paths open to Lebanon in the late 1940s: Laissez-faire liberalism, ‘statist’ interventionism, and a point between the two. Menassa’s recommendation was for the middle course: “There is space to find the right formula between two extremes, which would safeguard liberty and initiative but would also prevent the abuses, disorder and serious errors of an unscrupulous, individualistic capitalism”.¹⁸² Perhaps Lebanon’s predominantly Christian merchant elite had had enough of compromise: Despite Menassa’s warnings, the country veered towards laissez-faire.

¹⁷⁸ Khazen (1991) p. 23

¹⁷⁹ Salamey (2009), p. 83

¹⁸⁰ Hourani (1946), pp. 129-130

¹⁸¹ See Firro: 35, 49, 82, 95, 105; 148

¹⁸² Menassa (1948), p. 61 (translation mine)

2. Theoretical Framework

When Lebanon won its independence in 1943, the world was alight; those embers of war and revolution continued to scatter and combust for several decades. So Lebanon entered the ‘community of states’ in an unusually large cohort; for the next 30-odd years, the country’s prosperity, cosmopolitanism, and reasonably democratic character seemed to differentiate it from others in the Arab world and the broader community of ‘new states’.

In the 1940s, ‘50s, and ‘60s, political science was no longer just a subject for scholarly reflexion; it was a matter of strategic and national importance.¹⁸³ At the same time, the social sciences were swept up in the rise of ‘functionalism’ and empiricism. Western scholars fixated on the need to develop a rigorous, scientific political formula that could be applied globally, to help newly independent states find the right footing and develop stable liberal democracies.¹⁸⁴ Political arrangements were viewed on a spectrum, with “pre-Western systems” gradually progressing towards the ideal Anglo-American model, in Gabriel Almond’s well-known typology.¹⁸⁵

Today, the paternalistic, functionalist approach has been firmly disavowed (even if the impulse to disseminate Western-style statehood remains in contemporary discourse and practice).¹⁸⁶ In the 1960s, as Western liberal-democracy and ‘modernity’ failed to take root, some political scientists began to reconsider their teleological model of development but they were less willing to abandon the notion of an empirical formula for statebuilding. Rather, they suggested that alternatives to the Anglo-American model could yield productive, stable, democratic political systems.

One such alternative arrangement was ‘consociational democracy’, which was developed in the late 1960s through the work of Arend Lijphart and Gerhard Lehmbruch,¹⁸⁷ partly in response to Almond.¹⁸⁸ The consociational hypothesis was that deeply-divided plural societies could, in fact, sustain stable democracies through overarching elite cooperation and the

¹⁸³ Mitchell (1991), pp. 79-80

¹⁸⁴ Almond (1965), *Developmental Approach*, pp. 183-84

¹⁸⁵ Almond (1956), p. 401

¹⁸⁶ Mitchell (2002), p. 54

¹⁸⁷ Daalder (1974), p. 605. Both men helped to develop the concept of consociational democracy, but Lijphart won the rhetorical battle; Although Lehmbruch did not use the term ‘consociationalism’, preferring the term ‘Proporz’ or Proporzdemokratie, it will be substituted here for the sake of clarity.

¹⁸⁸ Barry (1975), pp. 479-80

institution of non-competitive political systems.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, social scientists developed “a fascination ... with the dynamics of ethnic differentiation, accompanied by a generalised desire on their part to discover how rival communal groups can relate to one another without conflict, chaos, and the disintegration of large political units”.¹⁹⁰

Lijphart and Lehmbruch’s core cases studies were Continental European – Lehmbruch highlighted Switzerland and Austria, to which Lijphart added the Netherlands and Belgium – but both used Lebanon as a final “principal case”, a promising example of the model at work in the developing world.¹⁹¹ As we shall see below, Lebanon was *descriptively consociational* during the Independence era. It is less clear that consociationalism promoted stability in the country. Regardless, in the 1960s and early 1970s, Lebanon looked like what political scientists had been waiting for: Proof that a broader form of political evangelism might still work.

This chapter will examine the consociational democratic model. After establishing its theoretical basis, it will assess the model’s democratic credentials, as well as the conditions under which a consociational democracy is more or less likely. Next, it will look at the major conditions of consociational stability – all of which seem to contradict basic democratic principles. In the second part of this chapter, we turn back to Lebanon, and assess its consociational credentials at independence, as well as criticisms and alternatives including, most notably, the Chehabist approach. Finally, we identify analytic criteria which may be used to gauge a country’s consociational-democratic health and Chehabist progress.

Consociational Democracy

In the middle of the 20th century, accepted wisdom in political science predicted that deeply-divided societies would tend towards being weak, immobile, and anti-democratic, and thereby more vulnerable to civil conflict. When looking at deeply-divided societies, Ian Lustick explains, we come from a ‘conflict-oriented approach’: Rather than viewing a society as a cohesive unit which, under certain circumstances, can be broken apart, we view it as a collection of groups and individuals which, under certain circumstances, can be made to cohere and endure. After all, most theories describe societal coherence based on levelling social

¹⁸⁹ Robert Dahl offers the following précis of how this process works: “Consociational democracies result in the formation of grand coalitions of political leaders after elections under ... electoral systems that insure each subculture a share of seats in the legislature roughly proportional to the relative size of its vote”, Dahl (1998), p. 212

¹⁹⁰ Lustick (1979), p. 325

¹⁹¹ Lijphart (1968), p. 25; (1977), p.1; Lehmbruch (1967)

cleavages, whether by assimilating divergent groups or stamping them out.¹⁹² In general, we *expect* to find conflict in societies whose internal cleavages retain a high degree of salience.

Consociationalism was the first theory to emerge from mainstream political science to challenge this expectation, citing a handful of deeply-divided societies which seemed to have achieved political stability under reasonably democratic institutions. The consociational model's key innovation was that it did not regard the deep, incompatible divisions in these countries as immutable obstacles to stability. On the contrary, Lijphart described consociationalism as offering a route whose "approach is not to abolish or weaken segmental cleavages but to recognise them explicitly and to turn the segments into constructive elements of stable democracy".¹⁹³ This led Lijphart, among others, to view consociationalism as more than a descriptive typology: it was also a "normative model" which could offer a path to democratic stability for other divided nations across the planet.¹⁹⁴

Lehmbruch was somewhat more cautious, though he called upon political science to accept the system as one of several liberal-democratic models available to emerging states. Like his colleague Eric Nordlinger, he saw promise in consociationalism as a model for conflict management and the expansion of democratic theory.¹⁹⁵ Lehmbruch hoped the consociational democracy model would challenge existing teleological views of political development that posed Anglo-American democracy as the system's best and truest form, and disregarded the democratic potential of non-competitive systems.¹⁹⁶ Along similar lines, Hans Daalder praised consociational democracy as a typology which "undermines the assumptions of dichotomous models based implicitly or explicitly" on the Anglo-American and Continental European models.¹⁹⁷

Consociationalism's prospects as a normative model undoubtedly drove a good deal of scholarly interest in Lebanon in the 1960s and '70s. However, as a final caveat, the reader is reminded that 'normative' consociationalism is outside the scope of this thesis: Consociational democracy's descriptive power for Lebanon's political system implies no normative evaluation of the model itself. Neither this chapter nor this thesis in general will tackle the separate issue

¹⁹² Lustick (1979), pp. 326-27

¹⁹³ Lijphart (1977), p. 42

¹⁹⁴ Lijphart (1977), p.1

¹⁹⁵ Nordlinger (1972), pp. 2-3

¹⁹⁶ Lehmbruch (1967)

¹⁹⁷ Daalder (1974), p. 609

of whether or not consociationalism out of all possible political systems was ‘good’ for Lebanon. Nor will it interrogate the broader question of whether or not consociationalism can be used to promote or explain sustained political stability in deeply-divided countries. Rather, it simply seeks to establish that Lebanon was structured as a *de jure* and *de facto* consociational democracy in the post-independence era as the result of a specific historical legacy.

What is consociational democracy?

Consociationalism, or consociational democracy, emerged from the broader pluralist school. Pluralism covers a range of theoretical approaches whose first and most obvious commonality is an emphasis on the importance of *groups*. According to Martin Smith, “Fundamental to all pluralists and pluralist thought is the notion that diversity is a social good that prevents the dominance of one particular idea. Power should be dispersed and not allowed to accumulate in the state.”¹⁹⁸

Consociational democracy is effectively a *democracy of groups* rather than individual citizens. In ‘deeply-divided societies’, segmental affiliation – whether based on ethnicity, religion, linguistic group, or another standard – has a high degree of political salience. That affiliation, moreover, is not something that can be transferred under ordinary circumstances.

To keep a consociation democratic, what matters is for the elite, the leaders of these varied segments, to cooperate and reach negotiated settlements on *national* policy.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the key characteristic of consociational democracies is the formation of ‘grand coalitions’ by the leaders of each constituent segment. Although specific traditions and practices vary by country, Lijphart describes the following generalisable principles:

1. Power sharing
2. Proportionality
3. Segmental autonomy
4. Mutual veto

Power sharing means that, rather than seeking bare-majority governing coalitions, ‘grand coalitions’ of all major players are formed so that each key segment has a voice in policy decisions roughly proportionate to its share of the electorate.²⁰⁰ Contentious issues are resolved

¹⁹⁸ Smith (2006), p. 22

¹⁹⁹ Lijphart (1977), p. 26

²⁰⁰ Lijphart (1977), p. 25

through bartering among these elite; because each segment has effective veto power, it can preserve its most vital interests. Meanwhile, on a day-to-day level the simplest solution for navigating mutually-exclusive interests among the segments is to permit a high degree of segmental autonomy where possible.²⁰¹

Similarly, three of the most important of Eric Nordlinger's six 'conflict-regulating practices' in deeply-divided societies mirror those described above: stable coalition, proportionality, and mutual vetoes.²⁰² The other three conflict regulating practices (depoliticisation, compromise, and concessions) will be considered below in our discussion of preconditions that favour consociational success.

Nordlinger stopped short of defining a theoretical model, but he expressed a hope that his work "may play some part in the development of a democratic model which will differ considerably from the one now widely accepted".²⁰³ Like the other consociational theorists he attempted to address a perceived gap in democratic theory, and he explicitly focused on democratic or 'open' regimes in deeply-divided societies. But just how democratic were these cases?

The 'Democracy' Factor

In a consociational democracy, these power-sharing principles are institutionalised to ensure that all major segments of a population are represented in decision-making – for example, in the case of Lebanon by allocating key political and administrative positions on the basis of sect. It is clear how the model is 'consociational', but is it truly democratic? As Barry observes, "Rival politicians may get together to suppress dissent and we may if we wish call the result 'consociation', but if it is to be consociational *democracy* they must carry their supporters with them voluntarily."²⁰⁴

In order to assess consociationalism's democratic credentials, one must first define '**democracy**.' For the purposes of this thesis, unless explicitly stated otherwise 'democracy' should be understood as a cognate of Robert Dahl's 'polyarchy' or 'polyarchal democracy'. Dahl coined the term in an effort to differentiate between the unachievable, idealised vision of democracy and the realities of contemporary 'democratic' systems.²⁰⁵ So the question may be

²⁰¹ Lehmbruch (1967)

²⁰² Nordlinger (1972), p. 20

²⁰³ Nordlinger (1972), pp. 2-3

²⁰⁴ Barry (1975), p. 500

²⁰⁵ Dahl (1984), p. 227

better stated as, “*What standards should we use to determine whether, and to what extent, a government is democratic?*”²⁰⁶ According to Dahl, the minimum requirement for a country to qualify as a polyarchy is the meaningful presence of six ‘democratic’ political institutions:

1. Elected officials
2. Free, fair, and frequent elections
3. Freedom of expression
4. Alternative sources of information
5. Associational autonomy
6. Inclusive citizenship²⁰⁷

For Dahl, the core principle of democracy is political equality: the constitution must consider all the members of a democratic group – or citizens of a democratic state – as “equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue”.²⁰⁸

This more functional definition of ‘polyarchy’ helps disaggregate ‘traditional’ democracies, like the Greek city-states, as well as the ideal-democratic models they inform, allowing us a far more meaningful gauge of real-world, contemporary democratic practices. It is all the more useful to this study as Lijphart himself turns to ‘polyarchy’ to judge a country’s democratic character.²⁰⁹

In traditional ideas of ‘democracy’, the majoritarian principle holds high ideological salience. For this reason, on an intuitive level, non-competitive coalition building may feel rather undemocratic. However, both Lijphart and Lehmbruch explain that different principles apply to coalition-building in adversarial and cooperative democracies. In competitive, adversarial political systems like the United Kingdom’s, governments are typically led by the majority party alone. When electoral results leave no party able to form a government independently, power brokers seek a ‘bare majority’ coalition with as few other parties included as possible in order to minimise policy concessions. The substantial political base excluded from that majority then forms the opposition. This generally works as a democratic model, rather than a

²⁰⁶ Dahl (1998), p. 28

²⁰⁷ Dahl (1998), pp. 85-86

²⁰⁸ Dahl (1998), p. 37

²⁰⁹ Lijphart (1977), p. 4

‘tyranny of the majority’, Lijphart explains, because the majorities and minorities in adversarial systems tend to trade places over time.²¹⁰

Moreover, majorities and oppositions in a more homogenous society can often reach ‘democratic’ compromises by meeting each other halfway, since as Lehmbruch observes, “if actors agree on political ends and means their preferences tend to be generally compatible and transitive”.²¹¹ On the other hand, preferences in deeply-divided societies are likely to be “incompatible and intransitive” in at least one area of major interest.²¹² In such an area, the groups’ interests are not found on the same spectrum, meaning a ‘rational’, ‘democratic’ compromise is far harder to achieve, if not impossible. For these reasons, a competitive majoritarian system yields highly undemocratic results in deeply-divided societies, with much of the population relegated to permanent minority status and thereby disenfranchised. Nordlinger also observes majoritarian democracy is incompatible with all of his conflict-regulating practices.²¹³

For divided societies, the cooperative model typified by ‘consociational democracy’ offers a way to avoid this majoritarian tyranny via grand coalition building on the basis of power sharing, proportionality, segmental autonomy, and mutual veto. Nothing in the consociational model directly contradicts the indicators of polyarchal democracy. Some polyarchal principles may even be facilitated by a consociational model, such as free expression and varied, independent dissemination of information. Most significantly, consociationalism’s inherent plurality necessitates some degree of freedom of organisation and opposition.²¹⁴

However, while the consociational model does not inherently violate principles of electoral freedom, it may marginalise them. Although individual citizens vote, the constitutional immutability of the segments means that electoral results reflect little change over time.²¹⁵ Because this kind of ‘democracy’ reduces popular accountability, the stability of a consociational system depends upon – and perpetuates – a relatively ‘passive’ electorate.²¹⁶ Moreover, as both Nordlinger and Daalder emphasise, leaders need to depoliticise the issues

²¹⁰ Lijphart (1977), p. 29

²¹¹ Lehmbruch (1967)

²¹² Lehmbruch (1967)

²¹³ Nordlinger (1972), p. 33

²¹⁴ See Dahl (1998), pp. 85-86

²¹⁵ Nordlinger (1972), pp. 33-35

²¹⁶ Daalder (1974), p. 608

as much as possible in order to avoid ideological deadlock, meaning the most contentious debates are kept away from the public altogether.²¹⁷

Lijphart's foundational defence of his model's democratic bona fides is that its outcome – the grand coalition – is the only way of assuring that all segments of the population are represented in government.²¹⁸ Dahl also suggests that, as popularly-elected officials, elites can be “a channel through which popular desires, goals, and values enter into governmental decisions”.²¹⁹ Indeed, Dahl notes that apparently un-democratic elite and bureaucratic bargaining are found in *all* polyarchal democracies. In consociational and non-consociational democracies, regular elections help keep representatives accountable, and elites may “mutually influence and check one another”.²²⁰

Clearly, consociationalism has democratic deficits. Yet as we have seen, in highly heterogeneous societies with intransitive interests, the primary mechanism of traditional democracy – majority rule – is functionally non-democratic. In these specific cases, consociationalism may present a plausible liberal-democratic alternative. Nonetheless, the weakening of electoral accountability leaves consociationalism particularly vulnerable to the erosion of democratic principles.

Daalder emphasises the need to disaggregate ‘consociationalism’ and ‘democracy’.²²¹ To fully understand the consociational model, we must turn away from the democratic question to assess those conditions which challenge or facilitate the growth and stability of the *consociation* itself. Political science orthodoxy suggests that deeply-divided societies should be prone to collapse and civil conflict. What stressors push a consociation towards this gloomy prophecy?

The Conditions of Consociational (In)Stability

Previously, we referred to Dahl's concept of ‘polyarchy’ to define what, for the purposes of this thesis, constitutes the democratic. The second ideal-outcome for a consociational democracy is that the system be stable.

²¹⁷ Daalder (1974), pp. 607-608; Nordlinger (1972), p. 26

²¹⁸ Lijphart (1977), p. 30

²¹⁹ Dahl (1998), pp. 113-14

²²⁰ Dahl (1998), p. 113

²²¹ Daalder (1974), p. 617-18

Ian Lustick defines political stability as uninterrupted, “specific patterns of political behaviour” (excluding the illegal use of force) which can be expected to continue indefinitely.²²² Lijphart offers a similar view, that political stability is a “multidimensional concept” combining “system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy, and effectiveness”.²²³

The primary distinction between the two men is whether or not a ‘stable’ government needs to be actively functioning: for Lijphart, decisional effectiveness is a core component of stability, but Lustick simply demands that the current pattern be stable indefinitely. From a literal perspective, Lustick makes the more compelling argument. However, for the purposes of this thesis, we defer to Lijphart’s view for two reasons: Firstly, given its reliance on analytic variables derived from Lijphart’s work, using his definition limits the potential for later inconsistency. Secondly, ‘immobilism’ is a highly relevant criterion for Lebanon’s post-independence political system, and in the Lebanese context may be more properly understood as factor working against stability.

In narrative form, this thesis thus uses the following definition: **Political stability** denotes a state of continuous political activity that preserves the civil order with the tacit support of the population.

A related, albeit broader concept to consider is **conflict regulation**. According to Nordlinger, while it is difficult to pinpoint a specific threshold for bare ‘success’, the conflict regulation spectrum runs as follows: Completely successful conflict regulation implies an “absence of widespread violence and governmental repression”, while on the other end, completely failed conflict regulation is when “widespread violence occurs in the form of a civil war with a death toll running into many thousands, or when an open regime becomes closed as the dominant conflict group uses the ‘agencies of social control’ to repress, imprison, or slaughter members of the opposing segment”.²²⁴

When we consider a consociational political system, interestingly, several of the most deleterious forces to political stability and conflict regulation come from traditional democratic drivers: majoritarian-democratic practices, modernisation, and the promotion of an overarching national identity. We will consider each in turn.

²²² Lustick (1979), p. 325

²²³ Lijphart (1977), p. 4

²²⁴ Nordlinger (1972), p. 11-12

Majoritarianism

Many of the anti-democratic effects of majoritarianism in consociational systems have already been discussed above: in deeply divided societies, the principle of ‘majority rules’ may effectively disenfranchise broad swathes of the population. Indeed, Lijphart explicitly states that “consociational democracy is more concerned with the equal or proportional treatment of groups than with individual equality”;²²⁵ the inverse is true as well.

Yet as Nordlinger explains, the problems with majoritarianism are not restricted to the level of elite coalition building: the classic principle of ‘one man, one vote’ may also run counter to democratic public interest in deeply-divided societies. He writes that, in such societies,

Conflict groups ... do not generally conceive of equal and interchangeable individuals as the foundation stone of democratic decisionmaking. To them the basic political unit is the segment or the conflict group. At least one conflict group – usually the smaller one – bases its claims and demands upon the equality of each segment rather than on the number of individuals comprising them. The negation of this assertion by pure majoritarianism is likely to hamper the appearance of effective conflict-regulating practices.²²⁶

Furthermore, Nordlinger observes that democratic theory fails to acknowledge that fierce political competition can lead to civil discontent under certain conditions, “and eventually the complete breakdown of a democratic regime through widespread violence or repression”.²²⁷ Lijphart agrees that “in a plural society democratic peaceful coexistence is vastly preferable both to nondemocratic peace and to an unstable democracy rent by segmental strife”.²²⁸ To mitigate the risk of competition turning into conflict, Nordlinger advises the practice of purposive depoliticisation, or removing the most contentious issues from public debate and electoral campaigns.²²⁹

Majoritarian, competitive decision-making practices are often seen as a means to ensure that the best idea wins – and that the competition takes place on an even and transparent field. For reasons explained in the previous section, in conventional democracies, these practices promote stability by expressing the popular will. Yet in deeply-divided societies, the same practices may become a tool of oppression.

²²⁵ Lijphart (1977), p. 49

²²⁶ Nordlinger (1972), pp. 35-36

²²⁷ Nordlinger (1972), p. 36

²²⁸ Lijphart (1977), p. 49

²²⁹ Nordlinger (1972), p. 26

Nationalism

Another surprising ‘unfavourable’ factor for consociational stability is the promotion of an encompassing national identity. Surely, the promotion of nationalism should *lessen* conflict, dissolving segmental cleavages in favour of unity beneath a common banner? As Lijphart warns, “Although the replacement of segmental loyalties by a common national allegiance appears to be a logical answer to the problems posed by a plural society, it is extremely dangerous to attempt it”.²³⁰ The first danger lies in the attempt to foster national feeling itself. Lijphart explains,

Because of the tenacity of primordial loyalties, any effort to eradicate them not only is quite unlikely to succeed, especially in the short run, but may well be counterproductive and may stimulate segmental cohesion and intersegmental violence rather than national cohesion.²³¹

Nordlinger makes a similar argument, and adds that nationalism may be disruptive on a systemic level as “a strong sense of nationality might jeopardize the carefully worked out internal balances which a consociational system allows”.²³² Furthermore, he posits, the only means to rapidly cultivate nationalism in a deeply-divided society may be from the pulpit of a charismatic leader. Yet in this case,

There is the very real danger that the outcome will be repressive rule rather than conflict regulation. In purposefully attempting to shape common loyalties to the leader or the symbol, the leader or the wielders of the symbol (usually the party) almost invariably claim to be the embodiment of the nation and thus to stand above the nation. ... Unity comes to mean the eradication of segmental and other group attachments because only the leaders(s) represents the general will.²³³

In his early work, Lijphart seems surprised to find that strong nationalism correlates with consociational instability. It is unclear, moreover, whether successful consociations are stable despite the lack of national feeling or because of it. Lijphart leans towards the latter, suggesting that “superpatriots tend to have an inflated image of their nation’s worth and stature, and tend to attribute its weaknesses both to external and internal enemies. A strong nationalism may thus become a divisive force and a serious danger to an already fragmented society”.²³⁴

²³⁰ Lijphart (1977), p. 24

²³¹ Lijphart (1977), p. 24

²³² Daalder (1974), p. 611

²³³ Nordlinger (1972), pp. 37-38

²³⁴ Lijphart (1968), pp. 29-30

Modernisation

Modernisation and socio-economic development constitute a third major ‘unfavourable factor’ for consociational stability. Although in the long term, modernisation may reduce the strength and salience of cleavages, in the short and medium terms it seems to exacerbate them.

Firstly, during modernisation, “the relative isolation of the segments which was conducive to peaceful coexistence among them is increasingly being challenged by the processes of urbanisation, geographical mobility, and nationwide trade”.²³⁵ Closer contact increases the opportunity for conflict among members of different segments; even more significantly, these processes create a keener sense of relative grievance among the lower socio-economic strata and are likely to outpace any rise in their material standard of living. Nordlinger explains,

Socio-economic modernisation ... *detracts* from the realisation of regulatory outcomes in societies deeply divided along communal lines by further increasing the number of nonelite individuals who manifest hostile beliefs, feelings and jealousies toward the opposing segment, by further intensifying such attitudes among individuals who already hold them, and by placing individuals in situations which allow or encourage them to act out their antagonistic beliefs and feelings.²³⁶

He observes that this trend is most visible in deeply-divided societies where modernisation efforts are new but rapidly accelerating, as the speed of change itself raises tensions and anxieties among the segments.²³⁷ On this basis, Nordlinger argues that modernisation poses the greatest threat to consociational stability “among contemporary nonwestern societies characterized by a combination of open regimes (at least on an intermittent basis since 1945), intense communal conflicts, low levels of modernisation, and the activation of the modernisation process”.²³⁸ He cites Lebanon specifically as a case where this applies.

Preconditions

Beyond these major ‘unfavourable factors’, there are various preconditions that make a consociational system more or less likely to stabilise and thrive.

²³⁵ Lijphart (1977), p. 175

²³⁶ Nordlinger (1972), p. 112

²³⁷ Nordlinger (1972), p. 113

²³⁸ Nordlinger (1972), p. 113

Elite behaviour

Lijphart describes the purposive formation of an elite coalition as consociationalism's defining feature, rather than "any particular institutional arrangement". This means that the elite must come together with the express purpose of "counteracting disintegrative tendencies in the system".²³⁹ His only *essential* conditions for achieving consociational democracy concern the elite, and their willingness to sit down and negotiate in order to minimise conflict.²⁴⁰ Daalder likewise draws attention to the importance of segmental elites being invested in the preservation of the status quo.²⁴¹

Compromises and concessions represent the last of Nordlinger's six conflict-regulating principles, and both also concern elite behaviour. In deeply-divided societies where segmental interests may not sit on a sliding scale, compromises usually mean a barter agreement involving multiple, possibly unrelated issues.²⁴² On the other hand, granting concessions is just as likely to harm conflict regulation as to help it. What matters, per Nordlinger, is who is conceding: if an actor offers a major concession to an equal or stronger party, it may exacerbate conflict. Only when a much stronger actor makes a 'goodwill' concession does this practice play a constructive role.²⁴³

Popular behaviour

Lijphart also stresses the importance of "popular attitudes favourable to government by grand coalition": after all, it may be difficult to govern if the coalition is constantly under barrage for being 'undemocratic' compared to competitive systems. For this reason, "the Anglo-American stable two-party system is thus not only a particular empirical type of democracy, but also a normative model which may form an obstacle to alternative attempts to establish stable democracy".²⁴⁴

Additionally, while strong nationalism would constitute 'unfavourable behaviour' for consociational democracies, as explained above, Lijphart suggests that public support for the status quo may be encouraged by moderate nationalism.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Lijphart (1968), p. 21

²⁴⁰ Lijphart (1968), pp. 22-23

²⁴¹ Daalder (1974), p. 612

²⁴² Nordlinger (1972), pp. 27-28

²⁴³ Nordlinger (1972), pp. 29-30

²⁴⁴ Lijphart (1968), p. 28

²⁴⁵ Lijphart (1968), pp. 29-30

A relatively low total load on the system

If elite behaviour must be purposive, it follows that consociational democracies usually develop in response to some kind of existential crisis. Both Lijphart and Daalder emphasise the solidarity-building qualities of external dangers to a country.²⁴⁶ However, after the actual formation of the consociation, external pressures are more likely to be damaging. The relationships between internal and external conflicts can also be a major stressor.²⁴⁷

Daalder, among others, stresses the need for “a relatively low load on decision-making processes”.²⁴⁸ In consociational systems, it is more difficult to juggle demands, as “the management of subcultural cleavages is already a major burden requiring much of the leaders’ energies and skills”.²⁴⁹ In the case of significant external pressures on a country, it is vital the balance of internal cleavages be calibrated to offset them – although ultimately it may be beyond of control of any internal actors.²⁵⁰

The Nature of Cleavages

According to Lijphart, “Distinct lines of cleavage between subcultures”²⁵¹ limit contact and thus opportunity for conflict: the efforts of the elite are more likely to succeed “if conflict at the mass level can be reduced – that is, if overlapping memberships are kept to a minimum”.²⁵² Moreover, he argues that distinct segments promote internal cohesion, which in turn helps the elite retain support. A related issue concerns the salience of these divisions: Consociational democracy is more likely to succeed where segmental cleavages have a high degree of political salience.²⁵³

Multipolarity

Lehmbruch raises the significance of polarity in a consociational political system. He argues that bipolar, ‘pillarised’ systems – especially when built upon a centralised bureaucracy – may be more prone to immobilism than more multipolar consociational systems.²⁵⁴ This is because in ‘multipolar’ arrangements, conflict resolution can be managed through a majority principle

²⁴⁶ Daalder (1974), p. 612

²⁴⁷ Daalder (1974), p. 611

²⁴⁸ Daalder (1974), p. 612

²⁴⁹ Lijphart (1968), p. 30

²⁵⁰ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 4

²⁵¹ Lijphart (1968), p. 25

²⁵² Lijphart (1968), p. 26

²⁵³ Daalder (1974), p. 612-13; 614-15

²⁵⁴ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 6

within the coalition itself. Thus, he concludes that “a plurality of independent centers of political power” is more effective in a consociational system as it lessens the chances of deadlock.²⁵⁵

Furthermore, Lijphart and Daalder add that when compared to binary system, “a multiple balance of power among the subcultures” in a consociational democracy encourages cooperation and discourages attempts to dominate rivals.²⁵⁶

Criticism & Responses

Consociational democracy has been the subject of considerable criticism, in large part directed towards its viability as a normative model.²⁵⁷ However, these doubts – justified as they may be – over consociationalism as a means to build political stability have little bearing on the scope of this thesis, which solely concerns the empirical model of consociational democracy.

More relevant, however, are two other classes of critique, which will be considered successively: challenges to the model’s descriptive power, and structural shortcomings within the model itself.

Descriptive challenges

Brian Barry’s general point of contention with consociationalism is that it is too “theory-laden”, encapsulating “a complex theoretical construction” that yokes together a string of dependent variables.²⁵⁸ If a political system had all but one of the characteristics of consociational democracy, Barry suggests, the term could no longer apply. While much of his critique seems overly pedantic, he raises a valid concern that, per Lijphart’s typology, government by elite cartel is laid out as the *only* way that a deeply divided country could achieve stability.²⁵⁹ Surely, there must be cases where conflict has been successfully regulated by other means?

Ian Lustick makes a similar observation, but goes further to suggest an alternative model alongside consociationalism: “control”. Lustick’s ‘control’ model describes a political system in a deeply-divided society whose stability is maintained through the subordination of some

²⁵⁵ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 6

²⁵⁶ Lijphart (1968), p. 27; Daalder (1974), p. 612

²⁵⁷ For example, see Daalder (1974), p. 620; Barry (1975); Lustick (1979)

²⁵⁸ Barry (1975), p. 479

²⁵⁹ Barry (1975), p. 481

segments to another.²⁶⁰ While less palatable than consociationalism as a normative model for conflict-management, he argues in some cases it may be more effective:

... In some deeply divided societies, the effective subordination of a segment or segments by a superordinate segment may be preferable to the chaos and disorder that might accompany the failure of consociationalism. ... In deeply divided societies where consociational techniques have not been, or cannot be, successfully employed, control may represent a model for the organisation of intergroup relations that is substantially preferable to other conceivable solutions: civil war, extermination, or deportation.²⁶¹

Lustick's 'control' model harkens back to M.G. Smith's approach to 'pluralism' a decade earlier, where stability was achieved through one minority segment's domination of the rest.²⁶² It is unclear why Lustick's model of 'control' does not constitute a form of totalitarianism. None of the founding consociational theorists denied that there were other means of stabilising deeply-divided societies, only that there was no other way to do it 'democratically'.

Lustick also criticises the consociational model for imposing an intentionality on elite behaviour where, in fact, there may be none – an argument echoed in Barry.²⁶³ Barry questions whether the consociational democracy model accurately describes all the 'classic' European cases, raising particular doubts about Switzerland and Austria. In the case of Switzerland, Barry finds the various 'consociational devices' present, but no sign they have been used for conflict regulation.²⁶⁴ In practice, he argues, decision-making bypasses these devices: For example, the Swiss tradition of simple majority referenda violates fundamental consociational principles.²⁶⁵ He also observes that, in contemporary Switzerland, there is little conflict to regulate in the first place. Rather than consociational democracy, Barry suggests that a basic *lack of hostility* among segments may preserve Swiss stability.²⁶⁶

In the case of Austria, he readily concedes that it is consociational, but questions whether the model is really responsible for regulating conflict since the consociational system came into place.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁰ Lustick (1979), p. 333

²⁶¹ Lustick (1979), p. 336

²⁶² See Rothchild (1970), pp. 599-600

²⁶³ Lustick (1979), pp. 334-335; Barry (1975a)

²⁶⁴ Barry (1975), p. 482

²⁶⁵ Barry (1975), p. 485

²⁶⁶ Barry (1975), p. 488

²⁶⁷ Barry (1975), pp. 490-91

For the final two European exemplars, Belgium and the Netherlands, Barry writes they “have been indubitably consociational in their method of conflict-management”.²⁶⁸ However, he asserts that since these last two exemplars are both characterised by religious and class cleavages, one must be cautious in applying consociationalism to societies divided along other lines. Barry argues that ethnic divisions in particular may be impervious to consociational regulation, for three reasons: he claims that ethnic groups (as compared to other forms of cleavages) lack an organisational hierarchy; share a stronger commonality of interests; and have a higher potential for truly savage intersegmental violence.²⁶⁹ Of course, these distinctions are manifestly invalid across much of the contemporary world, where religion in particular may more closely resemble Barry’s ‘ethnic’ mode. In practice, this seems little more than a claim that inter-European cleavages are less profound than those found outside its borders, or between Europeans and non-Europeans. The observation that consociationalism seems to work best in Continental Europe is hardly novel.

Shortcomings

Greater insight may come from perceived shortcomings within the model itself, which have been observed by critics and consociational theorists alike.

M.G. Smith observes that in practice, consociational systems inevitably produce *de facto* discrepancies in power between segments, which in turn exacerbate segmental tensions. As such, consociational systems would, over time, tend towards instability.²⁷⁰

Rothchild also raises the issue of adaptability: Even if a consociational arrangement reflects the current balance of forces, what mechanisms are in place to ensure it will continue to do so as demographics shift in the future? ²⁷¹ He warns, “Unless a consensus emerges over the particular institutional mechanism adopted under these circumstances, it is unlikely to carry the loads involved in accommodating ever-shifting group interests and power”.²⁷²

Rothchild continues, “Unless the coalition partners come to share a minimal consensus on goals and values, the political negotiating process implicit in coalition government is likely to foster intense conflict or debilitating *immobilisme* rather than fruitful cooperation”.²⁷³ His pessimism,

²⁶⁸ Barry (1975), p. 501

²⁶⁹ Barry (1975), p. 502

²⁷⁰ Quoted in Rothchild (1970), pp. 612-13

²⁷¹ Rothchild (1970), p. 613

²⁷² Rothchild (1970), p. 613

²⁷³ Rothchild (1970), p. 615

however, is directly informed by a reification of socially constructed ‘primordial hatreds’ as immutable and eternal –²⁷⁴ a premise which has been widely debunked.

Most worryingly, Smith and Rothchild both recognise that the system – even when working correctly – may foster negative outcomes including inefficiency and immobilism. Lijphart addresses these critiques, arguing that the model’s results must be considered with a long view:

In the short run, an adversarial system may be a great deal more decisive and effective in a plural society than a consociational democracy. But the price that probably has to be paid for this favourable result is the increasing antagonism and suspicion of those segments that have been denied participation in the government and that, rightly or not, feel unjustly treated. Short-term efficiency is therefore likely to lead to a breakdown in the long run.²⁷⁵

Similarly, Lijphart acknowledges – with caveat – is that consociationalism tends to initially make plural societies *more* plural. Again, however, he maintains that over time the cooperation fostered by consociationalism will sand the hard edges off a society’s cleavages.²⁷⁶

In short, Lijphart suggests that these are risks that consociational democracies will have to take. As we will see in the following chapter, they are also among the most common criticisms of the model’s performance in Lebanon. Lehmbruch was dismissive, however, of such critiques: “Lebanon offers numerous examples of impediments to social change and innovation which arise if an elaborate equilibrium of groups has to be preserved; but there is no reason to believe that the political systems of the Arab neighbour states are more efficient”.²⁷⁷

All of the primary cases used in the development of consociational democracy were small states. A common explanation for this pattern is that consociationalism complicates the management of foreign relations, so it works better for small, less engaged polities. Barry, however, rejects the theory, suggesting that the small size of consociational democracies is more likely a function of the need to co-opt experts to restrict and manipulate public information, as this would be easier to manage in a relatively small country.²⁷⁸ Dismissing the foreign policy hypothesis, he writes, “There seems to be no reason why ‘consociationalism’ should make the conduct of foreign affairs especially difficult and it is significant most non-

²⁷⁴ Rothchild (1970), p. 616

²⁷⁵ Lijphart (1977), pp. 50-51

²⁷⁶ Lijphart (1977), p. 228

²⁷⁷ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 7

²⁷⁸ Barry (1975), p. 484

consociational countries have all-party coalitions in wartime, presumably the better to deal with external threats”.²⁷⁹

What Barry does not seem to consider is that, in wartime, all-party coalitions form to respond to a common external threat. Lehmbruch contends that his case studies show “that the preservation of the inner equilibrium presupposes a reduction of external demands to the political system”.²⁸⁰ In the case of deeply-divided societies, internal cleavages may mirror external conflicts, with different regional or international powers supporting different segments. Thus, as Lehmbruch suggests, internal stability may be highly dependent on the behaviour of external players. Small countries, with less power and resources, may have an easier time maintaining a degree of neutrality.

The Origins of Consociational Democracies

How do consociational democracies come into the world? For the original theorists, interest in this point was primarily in reference to the consociational model’s normative value and applicability to new states. Yet putting aside consociational engineering, the question remains: Why did this specific pattern of governance independently emerge in multiple deeply-divided societies? Political systems in the original cases such as Lebanon, after all, inform and necessarily predate consociational theory.

As Lehmbruch reminds us, consociationalism cannot be explained by social structure alone. While structure “is an essential condition of this pattern of conflict management ... it offers no sufficient explanation” and as such on its own “cannot explain the practice of proportional distribution of offices and of non-competitive agreements”.²⁸¹

He calls for investigation into the “intervening variables” which coincide with these social structures to produce the consociational pattern.²⁸² These include the interaction of domestic and regional/international political conflicts, but the most important ‘variable’ is what he calls ‘political culture’, “the fact that peculiar norms of conflict management develop under specific historical circumstances”.²⁸³ Over time, “they become norms which are retransmitted by the

²⁷⁹ Barry (1975), p. 484

²⁸⁰ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 7

²⁸¹ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 3

²⁸² Lehmbruch (1967), p. 3-4

²⁸³ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 4

learning processes in the political socialisation of elites and thus acquire a strong degree of persistence”.²⁸⁴

Lijphart and Nordlinger among others suggest that elites must knowingly adopt consociational measures as a means to manage conflict.²⁸⁵ Daalder, however, is less convinced that consociationalism must be purposive at its point of origin, and wonders if the system could evolve organically. He calls for deeper investigation of “the historical factors which may account for the development of that special type of political culture at the elite level that allowed the later peaceful transition to modern pluralism”.²⁸⁶

The Lebanese example features both a lengthy historical tradition and purposive elite behaviour. In the following section, we will explore the origins of Lebanon’s pluralist political system, and their culmination – through the will of the Lebanese elite – in an independent Republic in 1943.

Consociational Lebanon

As noted in the previous chapter, the consociational model garnered attention for challenging the entrenched, orthodox position that unity and homogeneity were democratic prerequisites. Mid-century Lebanon, as an apparent demonstration of the model’s usefulness outside of Europe, symbolised this promise. De Vaumas, writing not long after Lebanon’s independence, described Lebanon’s adaptability: “Modern political institutions presuppose a society based on the individual, the Lebanese have taken them on like a coat which, not fitting well, they tailored to their traditional way of life”.²⁸⁷

The Lebanese political system from 1943 until the early 1970s was empirically and descriptively consociational in its structure.²⁸⁸ Although the consociational democracy model was only articulated in the 1960s, it corresponds with Lebanon’s written and unwritten constitutional framework from earlier decades. One obvious reason for the correlation is that consociational model was developed, in part, from the Lebanese case. While there are issues inherent to the application of a Western model to Lebanese politics, Dekmejian argues that the

²⁸⁴ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 5

²⁸⁵ Lijphart (1977), Nordlinger (1972)

²⁸⁶ Daalder (1974), pp. 616-17

²⁸⁷ Vaumas (1955), p. 598 (translation mine)

²⁸⁸ Hudson (1988), p. 228

application of consociationalism is ‘justified’ by the uniqueness of Lebanon’s political system in the Middle East and the theory’s ability to offer “cross-nationally generalizable hypotheses that have proven validity”.²⁸⁹

The statement that Lebanon’s political system was consociational does not imply that consociational democracy is a ‘natural’ model which reflects the intrinsic nature of Lebanese society, nor a normative judgment. However, independent Lebanon’s consociational democratic system did grow out of a long history of pluralism. Lehmbruch recognises the significances of this history, and specifically traces the consociational system in Lebanon to “the Ottoman tradition of autonomy of the religious communities (millets) and to the cooperation of Christian and Druse millets in the Turkish province of Lebanon since the treaties of 1861 and 1864 which established Lebanese autonomy and provided for a multi-denominational council of notables to assist the governor”.²⁹⁰

Although Lijphart places less emphasis on history in his analyses in general, he concedes that “prior traditions conducive to consociational democracy have played ... an especially prominent [role] in Lebanon”. However, as seen in the previous chapter, the seeds of pluralism can be traced back still further than the 19th century, germinating through discourse between the communities in Mount Lebanon, the Ottomans, and Europe.

The ideas of ‘**cleavage**’ and ‘**segment**’ are used loosely in much of the consociational literature, despite their fundamental salience to the model as a whole.²⁹¹ Lustick states that “as a minimum condition, boundaries between rival groups must be sharp enough so that membership is clear and, with few exceptions, unchangeable”.²⁹² Fortunately, in the specific case under consideration, we can determine both with precision, as they are legally prescribed.

This thesis correlates ‘segments’ to the constitutionally-defined sectarian groupings recognised by independence-era Lebanon: in the broad sense as Christian and Muslim, and in the narrow sense corresponding to seventeen officially recognised sects. Other forms of societal division, such as ethnicity, language, or political orientation, are not recognised as ‘segments’ in this thesis. ‘Cleavages’, in turn, are the gaps between those segments.

²⁸⁹ Dekmejian (1978), p. 252

²⁹⁰ Lehmbruch (1967), p. 4

²⁹¹ Daalder (1974), p. 612-13

²⁹² Lustick (1980), p. 325

The State of the Consociation – Pre-Independence

The earliest formal iteration of a representative system based proportionately on sect is found in the Double *Qa'imaqamiya*: First, by creating two districts under the separate authority of Druze and Christian administrators, and second through its *majlis*, or Council, which included a judge and an advisor representing each of the Sunni, Druze, Maronite, Greek Catholic, and Greek orthodox sects. Even the Shia were granted a representative on the Council, although the Ottomans did not recognise their sect as separate from Sunni Islam.

This proto-democratic plural system was strengthened during the *mutasarrifiya*. The *Règlement Organique* stipulated that seats on the administrative council be allocated along confessional lines to the major sects: four to the Maronites, three to the Druze, two to the Greek Orthodox, and one each for the Greek Catholics, and Sunni and Shia Muslims. Distribution was also based on geography, with each seat assigned to a specific district according to the most recent census data.²⁹³ At the local level, the *Règlement* stipulated that “each village community...would elect a village shaykh for itself, and the village shaykhs of each administrative district would elect the councillors from that district.”²⁹⁴

Under the French Mandate, confessional representation continued through the Representative Council. Article 95 of 1926 Constitution enshrined the distribution of public service and government posts to each sectarian community ‘on an equitable basis’.

However, while Lebanon’s pre-independence political systems were plural, they were not consociational. Consider the four constitutive elements of consociational democracy:

- Power-sharing
- Proportionality
- Segmental autonomy
- Mutual veto

Certainly by the time of the Mandate, an inter-sectarian *elite cartel* was taking form, but until 1943 it was both incomplete and divided; moreover, many of those elite were not committed to an independent Lebanon within its current borders. France’s preferential treatment of the Christians meant that they held at least two and sometimes all three of the ‘presidential’

²⁹³ Akarli (1988), p. 81

²⁹⁴ Salibi (1968), p. 167

positions – president, prime minister, and speaker of parliament – for the duration of the Mandate,²⁹⁵ which undermined the credibility of power sharing.

The 1926 Constitution formalised the principle of *proportional* political sectarianism, as Lijphart himself recognises. He writes that the Constitution “already embodied the principle of proportionality for civil service appointments, and that the turn toward the allotment of the highest offices to specific sects was gradually set in the 1930s”.²⁹⁶ Crucially, however, the Constitution did not specify the terms of proportional distribution. Meanwhile, once again, preferential treatment skewed the proportionality of the nascent system towards the Christians, and Maronites in particular.

From one view, *segmental autonomy* was reasonably high during the Mandate, as the administrative apparatus of Mount Lebanon had yet to be expanded to encompass the annexed territories. The Mandate and the 1926 Constitution also granted authority to religious groups to manage their own affairs on issues such as marriage and education.

Power-sharing, proportionality, and autonomy thus were all partly fulfilled, but they were obstructed by the same factor that denied any kind of *mutual veto*: The near-absolute powers vested in the French mandatory authorities. None of the Lebanese officials or elite had meaningful decision-making power, with virtually every judgment subject to French approval.

The Independent Consociation

From the early 1940s, consociationalism’s four elements – power-sharing, proportionality, segmental autonomy, and mutual veto – were all substantively present in Lebanon, and the country met the criteria for polyarchic democracy.

The National Pact was itself a consociational act, which saw the leaders of Lebanon’s largest communities come together to work out a compromise between their opposing visions for Lebanon’s future. The Pact established a power-sharing framework which predicated Lebanese policymaking on elite cooperation and consensus. In addition to the formula of ‘neither east, nor west’, it was through the National Pact that the sectarian allocation of the three major political offices was enshrined. If neither Christians nor Muslims were truly happy with the Pact’s results, both sides were willing to accept it, and able to bring along enough of the population to make it viable.

²⁹⁵ Salibi (1968), pp. 174-80

²⁹⁶ Lijphart (1977), p. 155

Presidential systems are rarely compatible with consociational democracy, given their reliance upon “the predominance of a single leader”. However, Lijphart cites Lebanon as an example where a presidential system can be reconciled with the model. In the case of Lebanon, he explains, the ‘grand coalition’ comprises all three ‘presidents’, who represent the three major sects, as well as the multisectarian government.²⁹⁷ In effect, Lebanon ends up with a combination presidential and parliamentary system of government, with an executive encompassing all major sects.²⁹⁸

In 1943, President Bechara al-Khoury and Prime Minister Riad al-Solh negotiated a government with representatives from the six largest sects. So together, the three ‘presidents’ and the new ministers formed Lebanon’s first ruling coalition, with each major group holding effective veto power over the rest. Salibi explains that, in this moment, “a new Lebanon emerged into being – a full partnership between the various Christian and Moslem sects in which no one sect alone could determine policy”.²⁹⁹

Meanwhile, new conventions defined ‘proportionality’ in the distribution of offices. During the 1943 general elections, the French and their Lebanese allies had initially pushed for 54 deputies, 32 of whom would be Christian and just 22 Muslim. After considerable pushback against this patently non-proportional division, the number of seats was increased to 55, with 30 going to Christians and 25 to Muslims.³⁰⁰ This 6:5 ratio would be observed until the Civil War. Despite the rigidity of the 6:5 ratio, Nordlinger describes Lebanon’s confessional electoral system as a force for consociational stability:

In each constituency the candidates belonging to one religious sect compete against each other, thereby taking much of Christian-Muslim conflict out of the electoral arena. And there is some advantage accruing to those candidates who play down the appeal to their own segment and cooperate with a candidate of another segment. The upshot is electoral competition, but of a kind in which “no community acts in such a way as to maximize the number of its reps at the expense of the other. Instead of communal strife, a tendency to develop communal cooperation between the candidates ... is established.”³⁰¹

²⁹⁷ Lijphart (1977), pp. 33-34

²⁹⁸ Bashir (1965), pp. 17-20

²⁹⁹ Salibi (1968), p. 188

³⁰⁰ Salibi (1968), p. 188

³⁰¹ Nordlinger (1972), p. 24

Finally, as for segmental autonomy, Lebanon's constitution explicitly and implicitly promises "that the regime will not interfere in the area of intra-confessional social relationships. ... This situation permits the several communities to coexist and even interact although their respective social structures are very sharply diverse".³⁰² Each sect would rely on its own court system, independent of the Ministry of Justice, to resolve personal status issues among its adherents.³⁰³ Informally, the elite agreed to stay out of other segments' internal affairs.

The National Pact was a flawed document. Most glaringly, the Christians came out of the agreement overrepresented, the Maronite President of the Republic had vastly more power than the Sunni Premier or the Shia Speaker, and no mechanism existed to adjust these allocations over time. In Lijphart's view, this inflexibility was the primary defect in Lebanon's consociational system.³⁰⁴

Nonetheless, all major components of consociational democracy were observable in independent Lebanon. While the Pact was unable to act as a positive factor of cohesion, as one Lebanese observer in 1965 put it, "the source of political stability in Lebanon is the concept of the state as a federation of sects, with no single group allowed to dominate the others".³⁰⁵

Independence-era Lebanon also broadly met the criteria for polyarchic democracy. As the Constitution protected free expression – as demonstrated by the great diversity of opinions expressed in the Lebanese media – independence from the Mandate brought the electoral trappings of democracy. Although female suffrage was only instituted in 1952, that particular inequality was consistent with contemporary global trends. From 1943 - 1958, the country held regular, reasonably free and fair elections under two presidents, four different speakers of parliament, and nine different prime ministers.

On the other hand, the allocation of political posts on the basis of sect undermines the polyarchic principle of political equality, particularly through its restriction of each of the presidencies to a single sect. Yet these arrangements had been implemented to ensure fair non-majoritarian representation for minorities, as discussed previously. If we take into account the structural challenges presented by the consociational model, Lebanon can be seen as reasonably democratic during the independence era.

³⁰² Binder (1966), p. 295

³⁰³ Bashir (1965), p. 22

³⁰⁴ Lijphart (1977), p. 149

³⁰⁵ Bashir (1965), pp. 26-27

Favourable and Unfavourable Factors

As we consider Lebanon post-independence, we can speak to several factors identified by the literature as favourable or unfavourable to consociational stability.

Elite behaviour: Lijphart insists that elite behaviour must be purposive. Additionally, elites should recognise the perils of fragmentation; commit to system maintenance; transcend cleavages at the elite level; and reach “appropriate solutions for the demands of the subcultures”.³⁰⁶ At independence, the Lebanese elite, and particularly those within the elite coalition, readily met these conditions: The consociational system was created through the purposive action of Christian and Muslim elites seeking an exit to a national crisis; in the medium term, all were committed to system maintenance; they were able to transcend their religious and ideological differences in order to cooperate; and they demonstrably reached solutions which satisfied the minimum demands of the subcultures, for the time being. Nordlinger praises the Lebanese elite’s adherence to “both kinds of purposive depoliticisation”: limiting governmental interference in segmental life, and actively attempting to keep the most contentious debates behind closed doors so as not to inflame popular sentiments.³⁰⁷

Popular behaviour: Lijphart and Nordlinger both note the weakness of national identity in Lebanon; weak nationalism constitutes a form of favourable behaviour where consociationalism is concerned. Although they may overstate the absence of nationalism in the country, their basic premise is correct: nationalism never became a mass movement in Lebanon, and ‘segmental nationalisms’ were far more salient.³⁰⁸

A relatively low total load on the system: Although external loads on the Lebanese system would snowball over the following years, in the early to mid-1960s Lijphart still viewed loads as light, and thus working in the government’s favour: “The Lebanese version of this type of democracy is neither very developed nor very efficient. But its society has so far been relatively static, and the government’s tasks have consequently been relatively simple and limited”.³⁰⁹ Nordlinger also observes that, because it is so easy to trigger segmental conflict in Lebanon, governments “have studiously refrained from taking on more than a bare minimum of governing responsibilities,” and constituted a virtual “night watchman state” prior to 1959.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Lijphart (1968), pp. 22-23

³⁰⁷ Nordlinger (1972), p. 24

³⁰⁸ Lijphart (1977), p. 155-56

³⁰⁹ Lijphart (1968), p. 30

³¹⁰ Nordlinger (1972), p. 26

The Nature of Cleavages: According to Lijphart, consociational democracy is facilitated when cleavages have high political salience: “In plural societies with free elections, the salient social cleavages tend to be translated into party system cleavages; the political parties are likely to be the organised political manifestation of the segments”.³¹¹ Given that Lebanon’s political system was formally regulated almost exclusively along sectarian segmental lines, the country’s cleavages were highly politically salient.

Multipolarity: Within the elite coalition, the three presidencies fostered a multipolar system alongside the elite from other sects. Lijphart describes Lebanon’s segmental makeup as close to the multipolar ideal, as the country “contains numerous segments, but they are all minorities and the four largest ones together comprise about 80 percent of the population”.³¹²

Critiques

To understand arguments against the application of consociational theory in the Lebanese context, we must look at two categories of criticism: general critiques of consociational theory mentioned above when held up against the Lebanese case, and those critiques made specifically in reference to Lebanon. As with the former, most critiques of Lebanese consociationalism focus on whether the model is good for the country, not whether it is present. However, some of the normative critiques have implications for the empirical.

In his critique, Brian Barry conceded that the Low Countries were empirically consociational. His challenge was whether consociationalism deserved the credit for conflict regulation in Europe. Barry did not reference Lebanon explicitly in his paper. However, Lebanon meets the criteria Barry used to determine its empirical presence in Belgium and the Netherlands: The core consociational devices are formalised in the country’s political structure and used in decisionmaking. So, how does his argument fare when applied to Lebanon?

Barry questioned whether the consociational theorists were catastrophising counterfactual outcomes where an elite cartel did not unite.³¹³ Yet in the case of Lebanon, there is a solid basis for believing that outcomes would have been negative in the absence of the National Pact. Firstly, cross-sectarian cooperation at the elite level was crucial in bringing an end to the French mandate and achieving independence. Secondly, it was only through elite bargaining that Sunni

³¹¹ Lijphart (1977), p. 61

³¹² Lijphart (1977), p. 153

³¹³ Barry (1975), p. 498

Lebanon was convinced to put aside their demands to unite at least parts of the territory with Syria. Finally, in Independence-era Lebanon, we have evidence of what happened when compromise and elite cooperation broke down in the civil wars of 1958 and 1975.

Barry also wondered whether the conciliatory attitude which presaged the formation of an elite coalition might be enough to ensure stability on its own. Once the various segmental elite knew that their rivals were reasonable and open to compromise, could they have proceeded to peaceably govern in majority and opposition, rather than grand coalition?³¹⁴

Again, in the case of Lebanon, this is utterly implausible. Interests were simply too divergent and existential for real trust. Lebanon's continued existence within its borders was dependent upon overarching elite cooperation and visible mutual concessions; the fundamental intransitivity of the Lebanese segments' respective interests necessitated both sides be present when deciding issues of national concern. Aside from authoritarianism or other forms of oppressive rule, some iteration of a grand coalition was the only arrangement that could have ensured the country's survival in the independence era. It is less clear that this is true for later decades, once all the major blocks had come to accept the idea of Lebanon as an independent state, but that question is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In short, while Barry's critiques may be instructive for the relatively unburdened European consociational democracies, they do not apply for Lebanon in 1943. Some kind of mutually acceptable power-sharing arrangement between the segmental elite was necessary to achieve and sustain independence.

The consociational system blocks unity and requires crises

Most of the Lebanon-specific critiques in one way or another imply that the consociational system is simply a mask. Gendzier describes it as "Janus-faced, with a modern exterior and a 'traditional' interior that far more accurately represented the organisation of the clientage system that operated through its carefully tended interstices".³¹⁵ For many Lebanese at the time, the National Pact's consociational national blueprint, sometimes referred to as the 'double negation' ('no to the east, no to the west'), seemed a poor foundation for statehood. Georges Naccache, editor of *L'Orient* and a spokesman for the Lebanist camp, wrote in his editorial pages in 1949: "The madness was to have elevated a compromise to the loftiness of State

³¹⁴ Barry (1975), p. 500

³¹⁵ Gendzier (1999), p. 53

doctrine ... to have believed, finally, that two ‘noes’ could, in politics, produce a ‘yes’”.³¹⁶ Naccache argued that the terms of the Pact engendered a system whose survival depended on continual division and crisis and precluded any kind of national unity or indeed governance.³¹⁷

The consociational system means an impotent state

In 1966, Edward Shils warned that the power-sharing formula of the National Pact was “too limited a constitutional basis for any state, least of all a modern commercial state situated in a very uneasily, even scarcely, equilibrated field of forces.”³¹⁸ In Shils’s view, the problem was lodged in Lebanon’s underdeveloped civil society. Under such circumstances, Lebanon could at best “maintain a ‘night-watchman’ state”, but the consociational balance remained highly vulnerable to upset.³¹⁹ In the same volume, Malcolm Kerr takes an equally dim view, citing two “two mutually reinforcing reasons” for the state’s poor condition:

First is the public mentality, which displays such scanty acknowledgment of State authority and, indeed, appears scarcely to grasp its conceptual meaning. Second, there are the divergent stresses and interest of representatives with the constitutional organs of leadership, that is, among politicians in office. On the one hand, the right of the State to take decisions is inadequately recognised; on the other hand, the trustees of the State are incapable of agreeing upon decisions to be taken.³²⁰

Given this lack of consensus, to Kerr, pluralism was not even working in the first place, let alone making Lebanon stable or democratic. Rather, pluralism may simply mask a decidedly undemocratic distribution of power and resources, with a weak state as its collateral.

Consociationalism perpetuates sectarianism

Helena Cobban argues that, while the trappings of modern, Western democracy may “come and go in Lebanon, ... the sects, and the politics of the sects, seemed to live on for ever”.³²¹ There is significant evidence, however, to support the claim that sectarianism was actively cultivated in Lebanon over the 19th and 20th centuries, and that as such it represents no

³¹⁶ Naccache (1949)

³¹⁷ Naccache (1949)

³¹⁸ Shils (1966), p. 5

³¹⁹ Shils (1966), p. 9

³²⁰ Kerr (1966), pp. 190-91

³²¹ Cobban (1985), p. 11

‘essential’ or ‘primordial’ divisions in the country.³²² While the lack of genuine ‘primordality’ may suggest that workable alternatives to consociationalism for Lebanon exist, it does not impact consociational democracy’s descriptive relevance for Lebanon. Conflation of the two, nonetheless, is a regular feature in the literature.³²³

Alternative approaches

After Lebanon’s descent into the ‘Hobbesian’ chaos of the civil war, Michael Hudson observed a new model distinct from consociationalism and Chehabism:

Lacking both an effective concentration and a legitimate distribution of power, the Lebanese political system over the past decade has evolved in terms of a third model, neither statist nor consociational, which we might dub the ‘non-state model’, and whose motto might well be *e uno plura*.³²⁴

However, if we return to the independence era, the only descriptive alternative to consociationalism to ever gain traction is the class-based model.³²⁵ Chehabism as an approach to the Lebanese political system may be – loosely -- included in this category. Despite the charges of some of Chehab’s critics, Chehabism was never Marxist; indeed, Chehab himself repeatedly cited communism among the greatest threats to Lebanon and world.³²⁶ It was, however, avowedly socialist, and understood class as the true driver of Lebanon’s misfortunes.

Class-based approaches

Class-based approaches to Lebanon’s political system often sit adjacent to consociationalism. Both, after all, are concerned with the elite, and many who describe Lebanon as descriptively ‘consociational’ still acknowledge class as well as sect in their analyses.³²⁷ The key distinction is that class-based approaches understand class and socio-economics as the salient cleavages in Lebanese policy design, rather than sect. Lebanon’s elite cooperate across confessional boundaries not to minimise domestic conflict, but to advance their common socio-economic interests.

³²² For example, see Burke (1988), p. 27; Corm (2012), pp. 30-31; Makdisi (2000), pp. 6-7

³²³ Kabbara (1988), p. 17

³²⁴ Hudson (1988), p. 234; emphasis in original

³²⁵ Kabbara (1988), pp. 12-15

³²⁶ This fear was conveyed repeatedly in his conversations with senior French diplomats, see CADN 91PO/B Carton 42, Dossier 1641

³²⁷ For example, see Hudson (1968) and (1976)

From a class-based approach, interestingly, consociational dynamics may still be at play lower in the political hierarchy. ‘Radical elitist’ C. Wright Mills explains that “the pluralist model of competing interests ... applied only to the ‘middle levels’, the semi-organised stalemate of interest group and legislative politics, which pluralists mistook for the entire power structure of the capitalist state”.³²⁸ Consociationalism, then, might govern local and bureaucratic Lebanese politics, even the parliament – but it serves to mask the self-interested nature of upper-level decisionmaking within the ruling class. In Lebanon, one major alternative to consociationalism was derived from this position: Lebanese Marxism.³²⁹

The Lebanese Left found its stride in the 1970s.³³⁰ Under the stewardship of Kamal Jumblatt, the Lebanese communists, secular Arab nationalist parties and others came together as the Lebanese National Movement. The movement argued that class, not sect, was the fundamental driver of Lebanese conflict and that “Lebanese society is under the control of a feudal-bourgeois class that needs to be defeated in order to modernise Lebanese social structure and create a secular state”.³³¹

In privileging class over sect, the Marxists were not denying the significance of the latter. Rather, they believed that sectarian conflict was, at its root, a form of class conflict. According to Mahdi Amel (*nom de guerre* of prominent Lebanese Marxist intellectual Hassan Hamdan), sectarianism was not really a religious phenomenon, but rather “a political relationship in the service of the bourgeois class, whose function is to bind the working classes to the bourgeois in a dependent relationship”.³³²

Mahdi referred to Lebanon as a ‘confessional state’, to distinguish this sectarian bourgeois state from the secular, “fully realised” bourgeois state of the West, which was “the very type that is meant to be the model on which the Lebanese state should be based”.³³³ The ‘confessional state’ based on two key principles: “the economic domination of the bourgeoisie” and “the political, ideological and constitutional system that enables the bourgeoisie to maintain its class dominion...”.³³⁴ But these principles produced what Mahdi called ‘the critical contradiction’. Traboulsi explains Madhi’s logic: “Even as sectarianism is the basic precondition for the

³²⁸ Evans (2006), p. 44

³²⁹ For an example of a non-Marxist elitist approach to the Lebanese political system, see Freiha (1979)

³³⁰ Farsoun and Carroll (1976b), p. 25

³³¹ Kabbara (1988), p. 13

³³² Traboulsi (2014), pp. 16-17

³³³ Traboulsi (2014), p. 17

³³⁴ Firro (2003), p. 61

existence of the state (the bourgeois Lebanese state) it also constitutes the primary obstacle to the construction of this state as a bourgeois state”.³³⁵

Traboulsi, however, is not convinced by Mahdi Amel’s clean division of sects and classes or his “critical contradiction”.³³⁶ For Traboulsi, Mahdi’s belief in this inherent ‘contradiction’ is “indistinguishable from the Lebanese Left’s belief ... in the existence of an incompatibility between the capitalist infrastructure and the pseudo-feudalist, sectarian superstructure of Lebanese society.”³³⁷ Traboulsi contends that sectarianism transcends the political, and moreover shares that space with class power:

The relationship between [sects and classes in Lebanon] is not one of separate but parallel entities, but rather a complex network of interaction and disengagement, mutual influence and competition, on the grounds that both are frameworks for engaging in the battle for domination and the acquisition of the social surplus.³³⁸

The consociational framework laid out by Lebanon’s constitutional documents unquestionably empowered the country’s sectarian elite. It was equally plain that considerable overlap existed between this group and Lebanon’s economic elite. Traboulsi explains,

The Lebanese bourgeoisie flourished under the wing of the French Mandate’s political authorities then ... established its republic by taking control of the state and subordinating its policies and laws to its financial/commercial interests, its loyalties shifting over the years between different centres of power.³³⁹

Through the capture of various presidents the group steered the state towards non-interventionism, giving themselves almost complete freedom to conduct business as they saw fit.³⁴⁰ Samih Farsoun and his student Walter Carroll described this ruling class as a union of “compradores, merchants, and landlords”.³⁴¹ Traboulsi refers to them as ‘the Consortium’.³⁴²

³³⁵ Traboulsi (2014), p. 17

³³⁶ Traboulsi (2014), p. 17

³³⁷ Traboulsi (2014), p. 18

³³⁸ Traboulsi (2014), pp. 100-101

³³⁹ Traboulsi (2014), p. 77

³⁴⁰ Johnson (1987), p. 133

³⁴¹ Farsoun and Carroll (1976a), p. 9

³⁴² According to Salibi, the name was coined by political enemies of President Bechara al-Khoury (1966, p. 214)

an “oligarchy”³⁴³ of about thirty families who, “not content to control the main levers of the economy ... used the political authorities to reshape the entire Lebanese economy in accordance with the rules of the free market”.³⁴⁴

For Johnson, the excessive power and influence held by Lebanon’s ‘hegemonic’ bourgeoisie made it impossible for the state to serve its structural purpose: “In Lebanon [the dominant economic] class had *direct* control, which meant the state lacked the relative autonomy necessary to make it a ‘factor of cohesion’ that could mediate between the competing interests” within and among the social classes.³⁴⁵

Class-based approaches and consociationalism describe superficially indistinguishable systems, generating the same purposive elite cooperation and accommodation; popular disenfranchisement; and a deepening salience of sectarian identities.

The key distinction is that, in class-based approaches, the elite are motivated by capitalism rather than national (or indeed any other) interest – the elite want to perpetuate the status quo and actively oppress the masses for financial gain. Consociationalism, on the other hand, requires that the elite also be motivated by interests unrelated to class struggle.

In theory, consociational elite seek to maximise benefits and minimise costs accruing to their segments (rather than to themselves) while maintaining stability. Most if not all consociational elites, therefore, should be dissatisfied with the status quo; they accept it as the best of bad options. In Marxist theory, on the other hand, the elite actively benefit from the system, and presumably would seek to defend it even if it were no longer needed.

Class and socio-economic inequality have always been a source of conflict in Lebanon, and have a better claim than sectarianism to ‘primordality’. It is difficult, however, to disaggregate class and sectarianism – especially in independence-era Lebanon. There is insufficient evidence to back the claim that, beneath a consociational mask, the Lebanese elite was united chiefly by economic interests. Arguments that make this claim seem to present the Consortium as synonymous with Lebanon’s economic elite. The Consortium was real and held tremendous power, but it was overwhelmingly Christian in its composition. Most of the Muslim bourgeoisie operated independently of the group, and often pursued divergent interests. (Indeed, on several

³⁴³ Traboulsi (2012), p. 118

³⁴⁴ Traboulsi (2014), p. 79

³⁴⁵ Johnson (1987), p. 120

occasions, segmental elite appeared to pursue policies that harmed their own economic interests, for little reason other than to punish their opponents.)

The argument could be put forth that it was the Consortium alone which, in tandem with presidents, constituted Lebanon's 'real' ruling elite. But if this were true, that would mean that their Muslim socio-economic peers were excluded from the cartel – suggesting that sect, after all, was more important than class.

Class-based allegiances, even at the elite level, do not seem to have transcended sect. Yet as we shall see, Chehabism as an approach owes much to the class-based view of Lebanon. Fouad Chehab believed that socio-economic inequality, not sectarianism, was the true source of the discord that fuelled the conflict in 1958.

The Chehabist Approach

Looking at the Chehabist era, Johnson claims the civil conflict of 1958 compelled “the establishment of more powerful and more autonomous state institutions in order to reinforce the superstructural unity which was so important for the cohesion of the social formation”.³⁴⁶ This explanation brings us back to the central question of this thesis – why did Chehab's efforts fail to produce the desired cohesion? If Lebanon's political system were really based on class, hidden behind a sectarian mask, Chehabism should have been more effective.

The Chehabist approach comes with an asterisk: Unlike consociationalism and class-based approaches, Chehabism was not grounded in scholarly research nor formally developed into a 'theory'; as such, it is riddled with contradictions. However, it is vital we understand how the Chehabists conceptualised their state and political system. After all, the state was the target of the Chehabist project, through which they hoped to advance “a new vision of how the precarious patchwork of parties and religious groups might be sewn together into something more coherent and durable”.³⁴⁷

This thesis defines Chehabism as a radical political project designed to transition Lebanon from a precarious, divided society into a stable, cohesive whole under a 'new National Pact'. The

³⁴⁶ Johnson (1987), p. 133

³⁴⁷ Hankey to Foreign Office, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, p. 2

primary indicators of this new Pact's success would be the achievement of national unity, modernisation, and social equality, through 1) The formation of a universal, inclusive Lebanese identity; and 2) Even socio-economic development and modernisation across Lebanon's communities and regions. These aims could only be achieved through a rational, balanced, scientific, sustained, and ethical approach.

This definition, along with Chehabism's ideology, principles, and imperatives, will be explored in depth in the following chapter. Here, we restrict ourselves to its approach to the contemporary Lebanese system: Chehabism's take on Lebanese democracy and political culture, its principles for moving forward, and the outcomes they ultimately hoped to achieve. The ideas informing Chehabism were most clearly articulated by Georges Naccache, whose 1960 lecture at *Le Cenacle Libanais* is credited with bringing the term 'Chehabism' into common usage. For the Cenacle's publication, *Les Conférences du Cenacle*, Naccache wrote an article based on his address several months later; it is this written document that we rely upon in the following discussion. While Naccache offers the more systematic explanation of Chehabism, these points are echoed in Chehab's own speeches from the time.

Naccache was the outspoken editor of *L'Orient* newspaper, as well as an ardent supporter of President Chehab; at the time of writing, he held the portfolios of Information and Public Works in the government of Ahmad Daouk. This latter experience further qualified him to articulate the Chehabist project and ethos. Naccache wrote that his time in government "gave me a direct, lived experience of the subject ... I had the privilege to live rather close to the man, to directly participate in this project we have settled on calling 'Chehabism' ...".³⁴⁸

As the first person to formally and publicly articulate the Chehabist project, Naccache began by explaining that, pared down to its essentials, Chehabism had created "a new mechanism for relations between Power and Opinion".³⁴⁹ Naccache believed that by launching a broader 'conversation' about Chehabism, the shared experience of the two years since Chehab had come to power could be used to "re-examine the very structure of our political society. We will see how this society holds together, and also how it could come apart – and what, precisely, we must do to ensure it does not come apart".³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ Naccache (1960), p. 3

³⁴⁹ Naccache (1960), p. 6

³⁵⁰ Naccache (1960), p. 6

So, what was the Chehabist understanding of Lebanon's political system? First, let us consider what Naccache understood as the fundamental question at the heart of Chehabism:

Here we have a country whose name has been written in history for 5,000 years. Two Worlds come face to face here – two spiritual authorities coexist – two moral Universes. Yet this is our whole problem (and the 'Chehabism' of which I would like to speak has no other meaning, it does not concern anything else): *The whole problem is knowing whether synthesis is possible; If upon this coexistence, a state could be built. If from this contradiction, a Unity could be extracted.*³⁵¹

After the civil war of the summer of 1958, the tug-of-war between liberty and security had taken on greater urgency. In order to protect Lebanon's independence and sovereignty, a stronger state needed to make inroads in marginalised communities. But could a strong, stable state be built in Lebanon while upholding its liberty and democracy? According to Naccache, Chehabism had developed since 1958 as "nothing other than the ultimate attempt to prove this case; to establish a shared orientation for the nation that would not be anarchy".³⁵² Paraphrasing Lenin, Naccache notes, "'Where everyone is free, everyone is a slave': this is easily the definition of the anarchy where we are, and to which Chehabism wants to put a stop."³⁵³

Chehabism would seek to stabilise the precarious balance between liberty and democracy and diffuse political power, through the creation of a robust, inclusive Lebanese national identity, vested in a modern, rational, and effective state.

Democracy

Much like consociationalism, the first question Chehabism had to confront was whether or not Lebanon was, or even could be, democratic. Since independence, Lebanon had been in search of a "institutional equilibrium which we clearly have not met".³⁵⁴ Was there, Naccache wondered, some structural flaw in Lebanon's plural system that made stable democracy impossible?

Lebanese liked to think of their country as democratic, he wrote, and it certainly looked "an island of liberty" amidst the regional neighbourhood.³⁵⁵ However, Naccache noted that many of the pillars of Western style majoritarian democracy were absent in Lebanon. The Lebanese

³⁵¹ Naccache (1960), p. 7

³⁵² Naccache (1960), p. 27

³⁵³ Naccache (1960), p. 28

³⁵⁴ Naccache (1960), p. 7

³⁵⁵ Naccache (1960), p. 8

system, he argued, was embedded in neo-feudal, tribal structures, and lacked “the base of every parliamentary regime: political ideologies represented by parties organized on a national scale”.³⁵⁶ These factors, he contended, gave root to

This whole crazy game of Lebanese public life ... this fantastical carrousel where we see cabinets and majorities made and unmade without reason, where no government in 15 years has been installed or removed by the parliament, where all legislation is made through emergency powers.³⁵⁷

On this basis, Naccache wrote, “We are evidently not a democracy in the strict, conventional sense of the word: the model democracy whose description is in the manuals, an English or Scandinavian style democracy”.³⁵⁸ In fact, Naccache questioned whether *any* country, in reality, met that exacting standard. In order to evaluate Lebanon’s democratic credentials, he – like Dahl – believed it was necessary to use a less rigid definition. And in that case, things for Lebanon looked rather better:

If democracy is the opposite of dictatorship, if democracy, more than an institutional arrangement, is first of all a state of mind, a certain style of relations among citizens, direct popular participation in public life, if it is ultimately based on the State’s respect for free opinion and free enterprise, well yes! Lebanon is a democracy.³⁵⁹

Chehabism understood Lebanon as democracy, if perhaps one which often failed to live up to its name. However, the peculiar nature of its democracy brought its own dangers. In particular, Chehabists worried that the confessional political system prevented the emergence of truly national political parties; this meant that ‘Lebanese democracy’ was only viable through a complex system of delegation which ultimately concentrated powers in the presidency.³⁶⁰ Chehabism, then, was partly a response to a Lebanese form of Caesarism.³⁶¹

In Chehabist thought, Lebanon may have been democratic, but it was a fragile, singular democracy. These idiosyncrasies continually threatened to pitch the Lebanese system into dangerous, anti-democratic disequilibrium. What they wanted was “to make Lebanon an image

³⁵⁶ Naccache (1960), p. 8

³⁵⁷ Naccache (1960), p. 8

³⁵⁸ Naccache (1960), p. 8

³⁵⁹ Naccache (1960), p. 8

³⁶⁰ Naccache (1960), pp. 9-10

³⁶¹ Naccache (1960), pp. 10-12

of a modern European state, or any state based on social justice”, planned development, and modern laws.³⁶²

The nature of the Lebanese system

Chehabism contended that, under certain conditions, Lebanon could be both “governable and viable”, but warned that the identification of these conditions required objective self-criticism.³⁶³ What characterised Lebanon’s unusual political system? What allowed it to function, and what was it that seemed periodically to obstruct it? Three interrelated factors determined Lebanese political life.

1. The Lebanese parliament is ungovernable

Chehabists recognised Lebanon as a deeply divided society with little space for interaction between the various segments. At the time, they believed, the only way to even partly address the problem of a highly segmented society was elite contact within the representative assemblies. Therefore, as Naccache explains, bigger is better: “The more the basis of this representation is expanded, the more it embraces the sectarian idiosyncrasies and regional diversity, the broader the encounter, the more chances to see it reconcile the religious antagonisms and political opponents”.³⁶⁴

According to Naccache, Chehab and his government had doubled the size of the parliament ahead of the 1960 general election for precisely this reason. Nonetheless, “It is not the expansion or contraction of the parliamentary arena that increases or decreases the ‘governability’ of Lebanese assemblies. All the Chambers are, in the current state of political formations, ungovernable.” A larger Chamber, however, was *less* ‘ungovernable’ because it was harder for individual votes to hold policy hostage.³⁶⁵

2. The concentration of power

Although the 1926 Constitution vested Lebanon’s sovereignty in the hands of its elected representatives, these were, per the Chehabists, “ungovernable”. Chehabists believed that a “quasi-totality of power” had ended up amassing with the president; ever since, this had been the only way to actually govern Lebanon.³⁶⁶ The driver of this concentration of power was consensus based decision-making, which dislocated power upward. According to Naccache,

³⁶² Jisr (2000), p. 141

³⁶³ Naccache (1960), p. 7

³⁶⁴ Naccache (1960), p. 14

³⁶⁵ Naccache (1960), pp. 14-15

³⁶⁶ Naccache (1960), p. 13

this contributed to the gradual downward slide of power from representatives into the presidency:

Themselves aware of this impotence, which is congenital to the “system”, the political leaders themselves transferred their authority to the only court that could assure the stability and the continuity of power and fulfil the highest function of arbitration: that of the Head of State.³⁶⁷

As an illustration, Naccache recalls President Chehab’s recent attempt to resign from power. The panic which seized the country’s politicians after the announcement, Naccache explains, was a clear symptom of a ‘Father Complex’ at work: “It was one of the toughest, one of the most arrogant among them who let out this terrible cry of distress which was reported by several papers: ‘If the Constitution bothers you, Mr. President, rip it up!’”³⁶⁸

3. Power relies on a multisectarian consensus

The only kind of governance that worked in Lebanon was when power was concentrated in the president. However, this concentration had to be built upon intersegmental consensus. Naccache writes, “This power is only conceivable, due to its very importance, if it is a genuinely unanimous power: which is to say, in Lebanon, a power born of the broadest interconfessional consensus – founded on the widest popular respect”.³⁶⁹

Naccache illustrates this point through the examples of Khoury and Chamoun, who both rose to the presidency on the shoulders of broad multiconfessional coalitions. The men were ‘unmade’, on the other hand, once they “stopped basing their authority on the necessities of confessional coexistence ... the uniqueness of their power destroyed itself, that the tacit agreement between them and the nation was broken”.³⁷⁰

In the case of Chehab, his presidency was based on a ‘negative’ consensus: “if the idea of his departure had produced this panic, it was that he appeared to the nation as the last defence against anarchy, to politicians themselves as the last guarantee of a regime within which they could keep playing their games and pushing through their ambitions”.³⁷¹

As long as the Father Complex was based on a president with the trust of all the major sects, Lebanon could function. The experience of Khoury and Chamoun demonstrated that systemic

³⁶⁷ Naccache (1960), p.15

³⁶⁸ Naccache (1960), pp.15-16

³⁶⁹ Naccache (1960), p.16

³⁷⁰ Naccache (1960), p.17

³⁷¹ Naccache (1960), pp. 20-21

stability rested on neutrality; the president must be a credible arbiter. Yet the dangers of Lebanese Caesarism had been demonstrated twice in fifteen years.

Caesarism worked, but precariously. In this spirit, Chehabism “may be nothing other than an attempt to make it stop: to rebuild the bases of collective power, to reanimate – or revitalise – democracy”.³⁷² But how did the Chehabists intend to effect this transformation?

Chehabist principles: How to keep Lebanon together

We have described the characteristics and dysfunction of the existing system, but, “If Chehabism is a “new political style”, what makes it novel? What characterises it? What in terms of thought, in terms of method, in the whole of his conduct, distinguishes the new Head of State from his predecessors?”³⁷³

In response to these questions, Naccache derives two principles of Chehabist politics:

1. Lebanon’s head of state cannot simultaneously serve as the head of a political party or other partisan organisation.

Chehabists believed that Lebanon’s Head of State should come from outside the political establishment. Aside from issues of partisanship, politicians were accountable to supporters and clients, and the Lebanese president must “[owe] his power to everyone: which is to say he owes it to no one.”³⁷⁴

2. Political positions cannot be taken on specific international and regional issues unless there exists a consensus across the major Lebanese segments

As Naccache wrote, “the great rule which must dictate all Lebanese foreign policy is that of Non-Alignment”.³⁷⁵

Our foreign policy must reflect, on the Arab level as on the International level, the very dualism of Lebanon. We have neither the right, nor anyways the power, to make choices or undertake engagements which, by risking shattering Lebanese unity, undermine the very cause we supposedly serve.³⁷⁶

³⁷² Naccache (1960), p.16

³⁷³ Naccache (1960), p.18

³⁷⁴ Naccache (1960), p. 21

³⁷⁵ Naccache (1960), p.17

³⁷⁶ Naccache (1960), p.18

The Chehabist Approach

In terms of approach, political leaders should be ‘Constructive Pessimists’, realist and risk-averse.³⁷⁷ Describing the Chehab as an ideal, Naccache wrote, “He holds no illusions ... but he also knows that there is no other choice. It is with the Lebanese, as they are, with these politicians, for whatever they are worth, it is with them and through them that he has to build a Lebanese state”.³⁷⁸

The Chehabist approach was grounded in reason, law, and prudence. Experience showed that coercive measures and oppression were ineffective tools for statebuilding. Rather, it should be approached carefully, methodically, patiently: “This slow way, this fluctuating advance, this almost lazy procedure of his action, and which tests the patience of a youth in a hurry to see the old political teams swept away, is it not archetypally Chehabist?”³⁷⁹

Radical changes were needed, but Chehab knew that this ‘revolution’ would take time. In order reform institutions, the Chehabists first must reform people’s attitudes and ethics. It was clear that “building a modern State atop old confessional structures is a long-term endeavour”.³⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the change was imperative. Chehabism was rooted in the idea that Lebanon needed to do away with its current system:

[Chehab] knows that, to make Lebanon modern and viable, first we must come to the end of the absurdity of a patron class and bourgeois class adamantly opposed to any social transformation – and which ... keep the country in a structural anachronism which constitutes its greatest danger.³⁸¹

A new Lebanese identity, through which “Lebanon is for everyone and everyone for Lebanon” must replace religion as the Lebanese people’s primary allegiance.³⁸²

Chehabism vs. Consociationalism

It is remarkable how much the Chehabist analysis mirrors consociationalism; yet with such divergent interpretation. Chehabism recognised that the nature of Lebanon’s system of representation meant that true parliamentary majorities could never be formed or reflected in government. Unlike the consociationalists, the Chehabists did not understand majoritarianism

³⁷⁷ Naccache (1960), pp. 21-22

³⁷⁸ Naccache (1960), p. 25

³⁷⁹ Naccache (1960), p. 23

³⁸⁰ Naccache (1960), p. 23

³⁸¹ Naccache (1960), p. 26

³⁸² Chehab, Independence Day address, Nov 22, 1958

as ‘anti-democratic’ in the Lebanese context; the fact that it did not work was simply evidence that Lebanon’s political system was broken.

Because legislators were therefore ineffective, they had to refer their authority upwards. This style of power-displacement is also a characteristic of consociationalism (and Marxist approaches, for that matter), where power is concentrated within the Grand Coalition. As we recall, consociational approaches to Lebanon describe power concentrated in an elite cartel comprising the government, president, prime minister, and speaker, rather than the president alone. While Chehabists believed that power was concentrated in an individual, they did acknowledge the importance of a grand coalition: presidential power had to derive from a broad intersegmental consensus in his support.

Chehabism, of course, predated the emergence of consociational democratic theory by about seven years. In this context, it may be unsurprising that the Chehabist approach views Lebanon as a broken Western-style competitive democracy, as alternative democratic models had yet to hit the mainstream. In order to make the Lebanese system more just, modern, and stable, more democratic, Chehabism posited that they had to ‘fix’ the major ways in which it diverged from the majoritarian ideal. They did not recognise that Lebanon’s political system followed, for better or for worse, a different model altogether: Despite the Chehabists’ ambitions, it could not be ‘fixed’ into a majoritarian, competitive democracy – it would have to be wholly deconstructed and rebuilt.

While they recognised that it would take a long time to introduce majoritarian democracy, they misunderstood the nature of their undertaking. More significantly, they underestimated the resilience of the consociational system. Under that system, stability and democracy were intrinsically incompatible with the methods they would use to ‘fix’ it.

A breakdown of analytical criteria

It is possible at this point to identify a set of criteria, which will be put to use throughout this thesis. As Dahl remarks in reference to his own classification schemes, criteria describe an ideal system, which cannot be realised:

The criteria do provide us though with standards against which we can compare the achievement and the remaining imperfections of actual political systems and their institutions, and they can guide us toward solutions that would bring us closer to the ideal.³⁸³

³⁸³ Dahl (1998), p. 29

With these objectives in mind, the criteria laid out below will structure and inform this thesis from chapters four through seven. However, each chapter will not use all of the criteria in its analysis. Those criteria which *will* be assessed in every chapter include:

- Consociationalism's ideal outcomes of '**stability**' and '**democracy**'
- Chehabism's ideal outcomes of '**national unity**', '**modernisation**' and '**social justice**', which will be developed further in Chapter Three.

The primary criteria for evaluating a consociational democracy are its constitutive elements and its outcomes. The **outcomes** are defined as follows:

Political stability denotes a state of continuous political activity that preserves the civil order with the tacit support of the population. It is gauged by the following factors:

- System maintenance
- Civil order
- Legitimacy
- Effectiveness

Democracy is understood in this thesis as a cognate of Robert Dahl's polyarchy. A polyarchal democracy is measured by the following standards:

- Elected officials
- Free, fair, and frequent elections
- Freedom of expression
- Alternative sources of information
- Associational autonomy
- Inclusive citizenship

The **constitutive elements** of a consociational democracy will be used to gauge how 'consociational' the political system really was at key moments in the Chehabist era. They are as follows:

- Power-sharing
- Proportionality
- Segmental autonomy
- Mutual veto

That analysis will also be informed by secondary criteria which help or hinder consociational democracy, as laid out previously in this chapter.

In the case of Chehabism, we have only outcomes and the progress made towards them to consider. The constitutive elements of their ideal competitive, majoritarian democracy remained, as they knew, several steps away, and were contingent on these initial outcomes.

Chehabism sought to ‘correct’ the Lebanese system by working towards the interlinked outcomes of ‘**national unity**’, ‘**modernisation**’ and a form of social justice referred to by Chehabists as ‘**le Social**’. While these ideas will be elaborated in Chapter Three, they are defined as follows:

- **National unity** is understood as the opposite state to ‘deeply-divided’, as defined by Eric Nordlinger.³⁸⁴ National unity is achieved within a society when national ties hold greater political salience than ascriptive ties across a range of issues. In the Chehabist context, national unity is predicated upon the sincere belief that Lebanon should exist as an independent, democratic country.
- **Modernisation** refers the rationalisation of government and society by developing, transforming, or replacing traditional institutions and technologies under the influence of new science and knowledge.³⁸⁵
- After Kabbara, **Le Social** or **social justice** denotes the elevation of society through the elimination of socio-economic disparities across communities and geographic regions within the boundaries of a liberal-democratic system.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Lustick (1979), p. 325

³⁸⁵ This definition is adapted from Salem (1973), p. 2 and Kabbara (1988), p. 182

³⁸⁶ Kabbara (1988), p. 182

3. Chehabism

*I swear by God on the Highest that I will respect the constitution of the Lebanese nation, and I will preserve the independence of the Lebanese homeland and the integrity of its territories.*³⁸⁷

As Fouad Chehab swore his presidential oath in 1958, Lebanon's domestic situation was at an impasse: the summer conflict had proven that the opposition could no more 'Arabise' Lebanon than the loyalists could drive it Westward. At the end of August, it was difficult to feel optimistic: Middleton wrote, "In the twilight of the Chamoun regime it is difficult to believe in a new dawn of restored harmony and prosperity for the country. Only the innate capacity of the Lebanese for survival gives one hope."³⁸⁸

President Chehab had an almost impossible task ahead of him in a country not yet fully at peace, but he tried to signal such hope to the divided masses. Chehab delivered three speeches from August through November of that year: One to mark his acceptance of the nomination, a second at his inauguration, and a third to mark Independence Day. All three, unsurprisingly, emphasised similar themes. Above all, he expressed the urgent need for the Lebanese people to recapture the spirit of national unity which had made Independence possible, declaring that "[Lebanon]'s greatest strength rest in our National Pact, in our union and agreement, in our confidence in ourselves and our total loyalty to our homeland, Lebanon".³⁸⁹ Chehab also stressed the imperative of building a state and society "on the pillars of morality, justice, equality, and duty".³⁹⁰

Over the course of the following six years, these themes – national unity and the construction of a modern state, which Chehab would later refer to as 'the State of Independence' – would evolve, but they never shifted from the centre of his view. As Chehab's agenda began to take form, both were reinforced with social justice, and came to constitute the interwoven core objectives of his approach.

³⁸⁷ President Chehab's presidential oath, Fondation Fouad Chehab

³⁸⁸ Middleton to FO, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/598, p. 5

³⁸⁹ Chehab, Address to the nation, 4 Aug, 1958

³⁹⁰ Chehab, Address to the nation, 22 Nov, 1958

Chehabism, as this project came to be known, was a product of Fouad Chehab's political philosophy, but also his temperament and experiences. Chehab readily deferred to experts when his knowledge reached its limits, so a raft of advisors, as well as various ideological influences, helped to shape Chehabism.

Two phases mark Fouad Chehab's presidency: from 1958 through the summer of 1960, as we shall see, the president saw himself as an interim chief, working to stabilise the country. From late 1960 onwards, however, he embraced his mandate with more vigour and ambition; it is then that Chehabism really came to fruition.

Over the following chapter, we will try to better understand Fouad Chehab and his influences, before considering the early evolution of the Chehabist project. At this point, we will turn to Chehabism itself, and further articulate its parameters and aims.

General Fouad Chehab

Countless factors informed the development of Fouad Chehab's political thought. Reflections of his lineage, his upbringing, his education and training, his faith, his personal experiences, and even specific members of his inner circle of consultants are visible throughout his philosophy. 'Blueprints' of Chehabism are observable in the way Chehab handled political crises in 1952, '56, and '58.³⁹¹

Like all Lebanese presidents, Chehab was elected by the parliament, but he enjoyed the broad approval, if not enthusiastic support, of the population as a whole. Chehab was known as the 'Father of the Army', and credited with having created a disciplined, organised, well-equipped, and cohesive fighting force: qualities which withstood the tremendous pressures of 1958.³⁹² In addition to his conduct through the summer's crisis, Chehab also garnered support for "his role of arbiter during the [1952] 'White Revolution', his refusal to use repression, his illustrious origins as a descendant of Bachir II and his disdain for politicians and their games."³⁹³

³⁹¹ Kabbara (1988) p. 110

³⁹² Brodie, Annual Report on the Lebanese Army, 24 Jan 1959, FO 371/142246/1193/2

³⁹³ Malsagne (2011), p. 177

Loyalists had a somewhat dimmer view of Chehab's actions that summer than the opposition. Chehab, after all, had resisted President Chamoun's instructions to strike rebel forces. Former Prime Minister Sami al-Solh accused Chehab of failing "to carry out his orders in time," and blamed him for the country's ongoing insecurity.³⁹⁴ However, for the most part, Chamoun and his followers were grudgingly prepared to support the General as the only exit from the crisis.

While the 1958 crisis did not create "acute material distress to the population" there were rampant disputes over dismissals and back wages, especially among those at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum.³⁹⁵ Moreover, those whose attachment to the rebels was in part motivated by neglect found themselves no better off at the end of the conflict. For Chehab,

The events revealed the danger arising from the acute social conditions and gaps in the country where the have-nots (in terms of regions, classes and sects) were rebelling against the haves of the country. Accordingly, at the end of 1958 a new interpretation of the Lebanese National Pact and the role of the state was required.³⁹⁶

Socio-economic grievances would have to be addressed. While some rebels continued to carry out acts of violence, by the autumn, there seemed to be among Lebanese Muslims "a fairly general feeling that things are worse elsewhere than in the Lebanon, and that the sensible course at present is the lie low"³⁹⁷ Although the propaganda campaign by the pro-Nasser press was ongoing, Nasser's difficulties elsewhere in the region were drawing his attention; and as Lebanese Muslims, by association, began to see Communism as a serious threat, their anti-Western positions had tempered.³⁹⁸

When Chehab assumed office in late September, the summer's conflict had nearly been extinguished, but a Christian counterrevolution was brewing. Crosthwaite recalls that, "For the first three weeks of September the situation moved slowly back towards normality;

³⁹⁴ Chancery (Ankara) to Foreign Office, 25 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/632

³⁹⁵ Hird to Treganowan, 10 Mar 1959, FO 371/142270/2181/5

³⁹⁶ Kabbara (1988), p. 106

³⁹⁷ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 24 Dec 1958, 371/134134/1015/667, p. 6

³⁹⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 24 Dec 1958, 371/134134/1015/667, p. 6

terrorism decreased, the hours of curfew were reduced, the shops remained open longer,” but it was not to last. Just days before Chehab’s inauguration, “this trend abruptly reversed” with the kidnapping and murder of journalist Fouad Haddad, a member of the Kataeb Party.³⁹⁹

President Chehab faced immense challenges as he attempted to prevent a resurgence of Muslim aggression while simultaneously quelling a Christian counterrevolution. This particular state of affairs, rooted in both sectarian divisions and socio-economic discontent, would dictate his political policy and philosophy for the next six years. This distinctive approach would come to be known as Chehabism or *al-Nahj*. President Chehab faced great challenges; he also faced great expectations:

If anyone thought that with Chehab’s election the crisis was as good as over they were soon disillusioned. The General showed himself an admirer of Penelope rather than Alexander. The knots of public security and political frustration remained uncut, while he wove soothing words of national unity for the ears of his suitors, ruffianly and otherwise.⁴⁰⁰

There were no quick fixes to the core problems of sect and class, but Chehab’s temperament allowed him to ease both Muslims and then Christians down from the barricades. Georges Corm, in his introduction to Malsagne’s biography, poses the essential question that surrounds Fouad Chehab and remains to this day unresolved:

Was he too cautious, too aristocratic in refusing to come down from his pedestal and dive into the political struggle to effect the change necessary to overtake the communal system? Or was he a shrewd man, too mindful of the frailty of Lebanese society to go off on the adventure of a true revolution which might have undermined the old traditions of the Ottoman millet system, as established by the French mandate?⁴⁰¹

Chehab’s origins

Fouad Chehab was born in 1902 in Ghazir, a Maronite village which hangs off the westward slopes of Mount Lebanon over Jounieh Bay. Under the *mutasarrifiya* for the first 13 years of Fouad’s life, Ghazir was Kesrouan’s administrative capital; it had long been

³⁹⁹ Crosthwaite, Annual Review for 1958, Enclosure I, 24 Apr 1959, FO 371/142208/1011

⁴⁰⁰ Middleton to FO, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134133/1015/598, p. 2

⁴⁰¹ Corm, in Malsagne (2011), p. 29

established as a centre for Jesuit training and education.⁴⁰² Malsagne suggests that Chehab's sense of alienation from Beirut may derive from the fact that, for the duration of his childhood, the future capital was part of a different political entity. Similarly, he proposes that Chehab's noted piety and francophilia trace to his formative years as a son of Mount Lebanon.⁴⁰³

Chehab's natal region would, of course, remain his polestar. As president, he declined to take up residence in the presidential palace, preferring a modest villa in Sarba; his cabinet meetings were held in Jounieh rather than Beirut.

The family came from a noble lineage: As a direct descendant of the older brother of Bachir II Chehab, the last ruler of the *mutasarrifiya*, they were allowed to use the title of 'emir', or prince. However, this pedigree did not translate into abundance. With two small boys and a third on the way, Fouad's father, Emir Abdallah Chehab joined thousands of his countrymen and left for America in search of better work. But after he sailed from Beirut Port, no one ever heard from Emir Abdallah again. Other migrants relayed rumours that his boat broke apart, that he was killed or drowned in the Nile or the Atlantic or somewhere off the Turkish coast.⁴⁰⁴

Fouad's mother, Badia, suddenly found herself on her own with no husband, no provider, and no money. She moved them all back with her two brothers in her family home down the mountain in Jounieh.⁴⁰⁵ Fouad's uncles registered him at the nearby College des Freres Maristes, but this accident of geography was formative in the development of Fouad's character. The French *Maristes* in Lebanon found their vocation in elementary education, and they produced many young men who would play key roles in the mandate and independence eras, including Michel Chiha.⁴⁰⁶ The Mariste College in Jounieh was founded in 1898 on the three principles of "humility, poverty, and divine faith".⁴⁰⁷ As Malsagne notes, "Education in an environment dedicated to asceticism and devotion ...

⁴⁰² Malsagne (2011), pp. 48-49

⁴⁰³ Malsagne (2011), pp. 49-50

⁴⁰⁴ Nassif (2008), p. 40

⁴⁰⁵ Nassif (2008), p. 40

⁴⁰⁶ Malsagne (2011), p. 51

⁴⁰⁷ Malsagne (2011), pp. 50-51

incontestably forged the lasting personality traits of Fouad Chehab, whose modesty and piety were perpetually lauded” for the duration of his life.⁴⁰⁸

Fouad Chehab came of age in a period of tremendous change: The First World War, famine, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, military occupation, and the declaration of an independent Lebanon under French Mandate. Two of Fouad’s maternal relations, suspected of conspiring with the French and promoting autonomy, were among the men executed by the Porte in 1916.⁴⁰⁹ Then, from 1915-16, famine killed more than a third of Mount Lebanon’s population.

Malsagne also links the development of Chehab’s social consciousness to these early days. The family remained poor; at just 14 Fouad left school so he could contribute another salary the household. Three years later, in 1919, Fouad Chehab enlisted with the Syrian Legion of the French auxiliary troops in the Levant. It was a practical decision: Chehab lacked the educational qualifications for an administrative position, and he needed a salary to help his family: “the army was not a vocation for the young Fouad, but firstly met the need to put food on the table”.⁴¹⁰

At the end of 1921, Chehab enrolled at the French Military Academy in Damascus, which had been founded earlier that same year to ensure local recruits received proper training *à la française*. Over the following two years, Chehab was subject to the strict discipline and rigorous academic training of the Academy, studying war, strategy, weapons technology, and so forth. Equally important, perhaps, was the general education which complemented military and scientific instruction with courses in history, geography, and literature.⁴¹¹

After his marriage to a Frenchwoman, in 1929 Captain Chehab was sent to France for a year of further training. While abroad, Chehab received technical and strategic training. To complement this theoretical instruction, he spent several months training within a French infantry detachment. He was immersed in French military culture and his connection to the mandatory powers strengthened; he also had the chance to observe, first hand, the

⁴⁰⁸ Malsagne (2011), p. 51

⁴⁰⁹ Malsagne (2011), p. 54

⁴¹⁰ Malsagne (2011), p. 57

⁴¹¹ Malsagne (2011), p. 61

operations of large scale factories and industrialisation, and other aspects of ‘modern’ life not yet evident in Lebanon. However, France was also in the midst of economic and political crises, which he followed attentively.⁴¹²

By the time Chehab returned to Lebanon, the Syrian legion had been reorganised into the *Troupes Spéciales du Levant*. A decade on, in 1939, then Commandant Chehab was once again sent to France for still more comprehensive practical training and to enrol at the famed *L'Ecole Supérieure de Guerre*. Over the following years, amidst the Second World War and increasingly loud local demands for independence, Chehab continued to progress. Malsagne notes that he was “at once a loyal servant of the mandatory power, but also an actor and observer of the evolution of a corps” that would become the Lebanese army.⁴¹³

So highly regarded was Chehab within the *Troupes Spéciales*, he even earned a brief mention in Charles De Gaulle’s war memoirs as an example of the high caliber of Lebanese officers.⁴¹⁴ Chehab progressed rapidly through the ranks. With the outbreak of the Second World War, he was integrated more deeply into the French structure, and in 1940, he was promoted to be the youngest general in the entire French Army.⁴¹⁵

Over the course of the 1930s, Chehab once again worked in diverse regions with highly variable levels of socio-economic attainment. From 1937-38, he worked almost exclusively in the marginalised peripheral regions which had been annexed to create Greater Lebanon. Through his engagement with the local populations in the North, South, and East of Lebanon, he developed a more nuanced understanding of social issues in Lebanon as well as the tenuousness of the connection these people felt to the Lebanese State.⁴¹⁶

Chehab was one of the officers tasked with reorganizing the *Troupes Spéciales*, preparing them for both local defence and deployment to other Allied theatres.⁴¹⁷ It was opposition against the latter practice that pushed many senior Lebanese officers, including Chehab, to

⁴¹² Malsagne (2011), pp. 65-67

⁴¹³ Malsagne (2011), p. 68

⁴¹⁴ Malsagne (2011), p. 71

⁴¹⁵ Malsagne (2011), p. 75

⁴¹⁶ Malsagne (2011), p. 72

⁴¹⁷ Malsagne (2011), pp. 80-81

show solidarity with the nationalist cause.⁴¹⁸ Chehab did not oppose the French –in fact, he continued to follow orders – but he expected them to live up to their promise that Lebanon would be independent after the war. Chehab put his name to a joint declaration to this effect in July 1941. Although the declaration’s impact is limited, it is viewed as a founding document of the Lebanese army.⁴¹⁹

Chehab supported the nationalists, but his level of involvement in the struggle for independence is unclear; indeed, it was unclear at the time. The French began to worry that Chehab was colluding directly with the British. In 1943, the *Délégation Générale de la France au Levant* reported that then-Colonel Chehab had publicly declared his support for the Destour, and was pressuring his officers to pressure their soldiers to pressure their families to vote Destour in the upcoming election.⁴²⁰ A month later, they reported that Lebanese public opinion was “stupefied” by the appearance of an officer of what was still technically French Army adopting such a position. This, in turn, had sparked rumours that Chehab would be promoted to Commander of a post-independence Lebanese army; the author, the Director of Army General Security, noted that this was not the first time Chehab had seemed preoccupied by local politics.⁴²¹ While there is no evidence to substantiate this claim, Chehab’s subsequent appointment as army commander lends some credence to the theory.⁴²²

However, it is unlikely that Chehab took such an active role in independence, and it was not long before French suspicions largely passed as they found the descriptions of Chehab’s anti-French activities were completely at odds with their impressions of him as a measured, moderate francophile. The French were somewhat reassured to discover that the British were also spying on him. In an apparent attempt to gather information about the Lieutenant-Colonel, the British even planted a rumour within the *Sûreté Générale* that Chehab plotting with Defense Minister Majid Arslan transfer the *Chasseurs Libanais* to local, Lebanese authority. If the French resisted, Chehab would lead a mutiny against them. As the French

⁴¹⁸ Malsagne (2011), pp. 82

⁴¹⁹ Malsagne (2011), p. 90

⁴²⁰ Sûreté Générale to French Ambassador, 23 Aug 1943, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴²¹ Délégation Générale de la France au Levant, 28 Jul 1943, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴²² Malsagne (2011), pp. 98

reported, “this information appeared, to say the least, strange...”.⁴²³ It is much more likely that Chehab played a fairly passive role.

In the months after independence, Chehab continued to ascend in the ranks, to the apparent satisfaction of the new Lebanese government.⁴²⁴ During the transitional period that followed, Chehab acted as the primary liaison between the Lebanese and the French regarding the military handover.⁴²⁵ Chehab maintained positive, productive relations with the French throughout the handover, a fact reflected by the French decision to award him the *Legion d’Honneur* in 1946.⁴²⁶

On 1 August 1945, the *Troupes Spéciales* were fully transferred to the Lebanese, with General Chehab as their commander (although the last French troops would not depart until the following year). Chehab would continue in this post until his inauguration as president in 1958.

Malsagne observes that the media only began to toss Chehab’s name around as a candidate in the summer of 1945; his nomination only came after a meeting between Chehab and President Khoury on 26 July.⁴²⁷ Although Prime Minister Riad al-Solh was not in attendance, he is rumoured to have personally persuaded Chehab to accept the command.⁴²⁸

Chehab was determined to instil the 3,000-odd troops of the new Lebanese army with the discipline and coherence it lacked. One of his first moves was to set up an officer training facility, and he refused to allow anyone to ascend to the rank of officer without training either there or at the old French academy in Damascus. Although he attempted to enforce a strict meritocracy, Article 95 of the constitution complicated the effort by enforcing sectarian distribution.⁴²⁹ In January of the following year, an army intelligence branch, the *Deuxième Bureau*, was established, reporting directly to the army commander.⁴³⁰

⁴²³ Sureté Générale, 17 Dec 1943, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴²⁴ Sureté aux Armées, 12 Apr 1944, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴²⁵ Malsagne (2011), pp. 96

⁴²⁶ French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ambassador in Lebanon, 28 Dec 1946, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴²⁷ Malsagne (2011), pp. 80-81

⁴²⁸ Gorla (1985), p. 58

⁴²⁹ Malsagne (2011), pp. 104-05

⁴³⁰ Malsagne (2011), p. 107

The regime inherited from the mandatory period a tradition of seeing political activity being exercised through the Deuxième Bureau of the French army. The Lebanese armed forces ... were cast in the French mould. Nothing more natural therefore than that the Deuxième Bureau (by which name it is still known) of the Lebanese army should retain power and functions not always associated in peacetime with a country's armed forces.⁴³¹

It was this branch in particular, and its perception as a parallel power, that would later come to be associated with Chehab himself.

In 1952, a bloodless 'White Revolution' took place against Bechara al-Khoury after he renewed his own mandate. Chehab was tasked, once again, with mediation.⁴³² With the warring sides at a total impasse, Chehab agreed to temporarily step in as head of state, assuming the role of Prime Minister. But despite assurances of near-unanimous support within parliament and the backing Michel Chiha, the French ambassador, and Khoury himself, Chehab refused to stand as a candidate.⁴³³

Chehab did, however, hold political opinions, which he would share away from the spotlight. After his performance in 1952, the major western ambassadors would regularly seek his opinions on regional issues, almost "as though he were Head of State. Through his analyses, the general struck even those interlocutors who saw him firmly under the authority of Chamoun as an uncircumventable force on the Lebanese scene."⁴³⁴ In 1954, Chehab threatened to resign over an order to put down a revolt in the tribal regions of the Bekaa, arguing for a lighter "social and economic response" to the crisis. Similar episodes were to follow through which the army under Chehab emerged as a source of power removed from the government, and one with its own distinctive social vision;⁴³⁵ "By privileging development over repression, Fouad Chehab and the Lebanese army laid down the bases of Chehabism well before 1958".⁴³⁶

⁴³¹ Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4

⁴³² Malsagne (2011), p. 139

⁴³³ Malsagne (2011), pp. 143-44

⁴³⁴ Malsagne (2011), p. 148

⁴³⁵ Kabbara (1988), pp. 98-99

⁴³⁶ Malsagne (2011), pp. 127-28

Chehab was keenly worried about the Communist threat to Lebanon.⁴³⁷ In 1955, Chehab told Lt-Col. Carlot, France's military attaché in Lebanon, that his main regional concerns were communism and pan-Islamism, which he believed was driven by the failure to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. On the subject of local politics, Chehab predicted that, barring radical changes in his behavior, President Chamoun was unlikely to survive in his post much longer. He suggested that the best replacement would be Hamid Frangieh; however, he acknowledged that his own name was also mentioned. He explained that he was unwilling to jeopardise the army's stability, as "the Army, [standing] above the parties and religions, is the surest guarantor of the State."⁴³⁸ While replacing the president mid-term might prompt fresh Muslim demands for a referendum on the distribution of power, Chehab saw little danger in such actions as long as the Arabs generally opposed them.⁴³⁹ The French Ambassador Louis Roche, after a long meeting with Chehab in 1955, also noted that Chehab spoke with great concern about the advance of both Communism and Islamism in the region, driven by the failure to resolve the Palestinian issue.⁴⁴⁰

After the Suez crisis, Chehab accepted the position of Minister of Defense, but he resigned as soon as he felt the security threat to Lebanon had abated.⁴⁴¹ His behaviour, once again, suggested to the public that he held office only as his patriotic duty, and that his primary commitment was to an impartial army.

The Lead up to the 1958 Election

For all the myriad causes and catalysts of the 1958 crisis, the fundamental source of contention was the presidency of Camille Chamoun. The charismatic President Chamoun came to office amid widespread popularity, as a leader of the movement that forced his predecessor, Bechara al-Khoury, out of office. Incidentally, Chamoun's role in ousting al-

⁴³⁷ Malsagne (2011), p. 183

⁴³⁸ Carlot to Permanent Secretariat for National Defense, France, 15 Oct 1955, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴³⁹ Carlot to Permanent Secretariat for National Defense, France, 15 Oct 1955, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁴⁴⁰ Ambassador Roche to French Foreign Minister, 24 Feb 1956, CADN 91PO/B/42, pp. 2-4

⁴⁴¹ 370/142209 (Leading personalities), pp. 6-7

Khoury initially won him broad support among Muslims, many of whom would later become his fiercest opponents.

At first, the Chamoun presidency seemed to deliver: economic prosperity made the Lebanese standard of living the highest among the Arab world, the government introduced reforms, including as universal suffrage.⁴⁴² By 1955, however, internal divisions began to overtly manifest themselves in Lebanon, reflecting changes across the Arab world. The rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser stirred Lebanese Muslims to aspire for something better than the Christian-dominated status quo.⁴⁴³ The ‘Arab Cold War’ rift deepened between pro-Western and pro-Nasserist factions on the domestic and regional front with the declaration of the Baghdad Pact in February and the opposing Nasserist Arab Tripartite Pact a few months later.⁴⁴⁴ Both the pro-Western and Nasserist camps—led by Iraq and Egypt, respectively— attempted to draw Lebanon in their alliances, and Chamoun’s stubborn ‘neutrality’ angered and alienated figures at home and abroad.⁴⁴⁵ The turning point, however, came with the Suez crisis the following year.

Nasser’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in July 1956 prompted massive popular demonstrations across the Arab world, including Lebanon’s Muslim centers, in celebration of Egypt’s—and Arab Nationalism’s— victory over Western imperialism. Pro-Egyptian Lebanese politicians were quick to extend their congratulations, and the parliament passed a decree commending the action. Nasser’s surge in popularity was only increased when France, Britain, and Israel attacked Egypt later that year in an attempt to regain control of the canal. Again, Chamoun’s refusal to take sides inflamed the emotions of Lebanese Nasserists. After the President refused to sever ties with Britain and France, Prime Minister Abdallah al-Yafi and Minister of State Sa’eb Salam both resigned in protest.⁴⁴⁶ After the resignations, Chamoun began to lean more explicitly towards the Western camp.⁴⁴⁷ This Western turn, combined with Chamoun’s personal Anglophilia,

⁴⁴² Qubain (1961) pp. 25-27

⁴⁴³ Crosthwaite, Annual Review for 1958, Enclosure I, 24 Apr 1959, FO 371/142208/1011

⁴⁴⁴ Attie (2004), p. 70

⁴⁴⁵ Attie (2004), pp. 82-83

⁴⁴⁶ Kalawoun (2000), pp. 32-33

⁴⁴⁷ Attie (2004), p. 115

prompted charges that he was a ‘British agent’ and violating the National Pact.⁴⁴⁸ Anti-Chamoun rhetoric at home and abroad concentrated to a great extent on the President’s increasingly pro-Western policy.

Egypt was likewise offended by Chamoun’s policy, and in early 1957, began a series of political and propaganda offenses against the Lebanese regime. In particular, Egypt cultivated closer ties with pro-Egypt and generally anti-Chamoun figures in Lebanon, including prominent Christians.⁴⁴⁹

Chamoun’s opponents saw their fears confirmed in March of 1957, when Lebanon became the first and only Arab state to formally accept the Eisenhower Doctrine.⁴⁵⁰ The Eisenhower Doctrine offered US economic and military aid to Middle Eastern countries as protection against the threat of ‘international communism.’⁴⁵¹ The controversy it provoked came in no small part from the assessment that it was directed more towards Arab nationalism, which the US continued to take-for-granted as a Soviet tool. As Charles Kupchan writes,

the Eisenhower administration’s policy initiatives in 1957-1958 were not reacting to Soviet behavior per se, but to the potential for the Soviets to benefit from changing political orientations and regional alignments of power. The Eisenhower Doctrine was a response to the growing appeal of Nasserism and Arab nationalism, not to Soviet adventurism.⁴⁵²

Even without Nasser’s propaganda campaign, the general consensus among many Lebanese Muslims and much of the Arab world was that Chamoun had violated the National Pact by accepting the Eisenhower doctrine.⁴⁵³ At this point, many figures opposed to Chamoun in Lebanon coalesced into a unitary opposition movement, the National Front.

⁴⁴⁸ Attie (2004), p. 79

⁴⁴⁹ Attie (2004), pp. 34-35

⁴⁵⁰ Attie (2004), p. 112

⁴⁵¹ Attie (2004), p. 108-109

⁴⁵² Kupchan (1988), p. 599

⁴⁵³ Attie (2004), p. 118

A final blow to Chamoun's credibility came in the form of the 1957 parliamentary elections. Politicians generally campaigned as pro-Eisenhower doctrine or pro-Nasserist, exacerbating the tense political climate. Chamoun feared that Syria and Egypt would use their money and sway to manipulate the outcome of the elections, and thus had his foreign minister issue an urgent plea to the US for similar assistance.⁴⁵⁴ The US agreed, and provided extensive CIA funds in order to ensure a pro-Western victory.⁴⁵⁵ While it is unclear who, precisely, wrote the strategy, the 1957 elections were manipulated in order to unseat a number of the *zu'ama*, primarily from the Opposition camp, both through the use of funds and a gerrymandered electoral law.

By early 1958, rumors were spreading that Chamoun sought to amend the constitution to extend his presidential mandate. Low-level violence was on the rise in the country, and government had grown increasingly restrictive. The formation of the UAR, moreover, in February 1958, was seen as a victory for Arab nationalism.⁴⁵⁶ On the eve of the 1958 Crisis, the National Pact had crumbled: while many Sunnis and pan-Arabists clamored to join the UAR, the Christians and nationalists desperately entreated the West to protect Lebanon from being swallowed up in the Nasserist tide.

While personal ambition undoubtedly factored in, the British suggest that Chamoun "was right in thinking that there was no alternative candidate equally determined to pursue a policy of alignment with the West and defence of Christian established positions here. ... Where he proved wrong was in thinking that he could impose this policy on the Lebanon".⁴⁵⁷ Along these lines, the US supported Chamoun as a bulwark against the rising tide of Arab nationalism. On 4 May, in a cable to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the US Ambassador to Lebanon Robert McClintock reported,

We shall have to support Chamoun despite known risks. ... His success or failure must be judged in much wider context than mere internal Lebanese politics. Once he has announced his intentions western failure to support him will have repercussions among

⁴⁵⁴ Attie (2004), pp 131-135

⁴⁵⁵ Attie (2004), 133-137

⁴⁵⁶ Kalawoun (2000), pp. 64-65

⁴⁵⁷ Crosthwaite, Annual Review for 1958, Enclosure I, 24 Apr 1959, FO 371/142208/1011, p. 2

all most moderate and responsible friends and allies of west in ME area. Chamoun has come to symbolize to them forces of resistance to Nasser.⁴⁵⁸

The tipping point for the Lebanese crisis was the assassination of a prominent anti-Chamoun journalist in Beirut on 8 May 1958. The opposition immediately demanded the resignation of the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign minister, and called for a general strike across Lebanon.⁴⁵⁹ Riots broke out across the country, causing massive destruction and high casualties rates. Shortly thereafter, Syria announced that the province of North Lebanon had applied to join the UAR. The country was falling apart. Chamoun's demands that Chehab crack down on the rebels went unheeded, despite the intervention of a contemptuous US Ambassador McClintock in support of Chamoun's position.⁴⁶⁰

Within a few days, Raymond Edde was proposing a resolution along the lines of 1952: replacing the al-Solh cabinet with a three-man government presided over by General Chehab. Once again, the expectation was that Muslims would tolerate a violation of the National Pact as long as the Premier was a man like Chehab. Edde's proposal gained traction, even earning the support of Nasser himself and, conditionally, Chehab. However, neither side was prepared to compromise on the fundamental question of whether Chamoun would stay or go.⁴⁶¹ Despite the tensions between Chehab and Chamoun, the former was adamant that the latter serve out his full term in accordance with the constitution.

The Lebanese government filed complaints against the UAR with the UN and the Arab League, accusing it of interference in Lebanese internal affairs. Specifically, the government believed that the UAR was providing substantial material support to the Opposition, in the form of arms and fighters.⁴⁶² In early June, the Arab League Council adopted a draft proposal on the Lebanese complaint; however, the resolution was not seen as adequately critical of Egypt, and talks fell apart. The UN, which had deferred its discussion of the complaint till after the Arab League could attempt to deal with it, now

⁴⁵⁸ McClintock to Dulles, Foreign Service Dispatch No. 3674, Top Secret, Department of State Central Files, 783A.00, 4 May 1958, qtd in Attié, (2004), p.164.

⁴⁵⁹ Attie (2004), pp 170-172

⁴⁶⁰ Malsagne (2011), p. 185

⁴⁶¹ Malsagne (2011), pp. 177-81

⁴⁶² Kalawoun (2000), pp. 53-55

convened a session on the situation in Lebanon and passed a resolution to send observers to gauge the level of UAR interference. The first observers arrived in Lebanon the following day.⁴⁶³

Meanwhile, the crisis flared as rebels attempted to attack the Presidential Palace. Although the army managed to repulse them, coordinated groups were successful in looting then burning down the Beirut home of the Lebanese Prime Minister. Over the next few days, the Lebanese government publicly accused the UAR of attempting to destroy Lebanon, stating that Syria and Egypt had been subversively working to oust the regime ever since Suez.⁴⁶⁴

By June, Chamoun was already seeking foreign intervention in the fight. Chehab relayed his strong opposition to such a move, warning Western diplomats that he would resign as army chief should it come to pass.⁴⁶⁵ According to Malsagne, Chehab feared that all his hard work to build a neutral, unified Lebanese army would be jeopardised by foreign intervention against the rebels.⁴⁶⁶ At the same time, he stated that the Lebanese Army would be unable to bring about a speedy resolution to the conflict. The Americans disagreed with this assessment, and began to consider Chehab's replacement. Sir George Middleton writes, the US Embassy believed "that if the Lebanese forces were led with determination they could put down the civil war, albeit at a price. Under General Chehab, they never would."⁴⁶⁷

Chamoun agreed with the US assessment, and said that Chehab would have to go. However, he believed that the dismissal should take place after any foreign intervention. Chamoun worried that "the army would be demoralized for a period of 24 hours at the time for dismissal, and that during this period the mob might gain ascendancy. ... If he were removed first, Anglo-United States forces might face anarchy on landing."⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶³ Attie (2004), p. 215

⁴⁶⁴ Kalawoun (2000), pp. 50-52

⁴⁶⁵ Middleton to FO, 16 Jun 1958, FO 371/134122/1015/288G, p. 1

⁴⁶⁶ Malsagne (2011), p. 173

⁴⁶⁷ Middleton to FO, 16 Jun 1958, FO 371/134122/1015/288G

⁴⁶⁸ Middleton to FO, 16 Jun 1958, FO 371/134122/1015/290G

On the eve of the US intervention, Chamoun grudgingly conceded to the US Ambassador that, if a presidential election were held at the end of the month, the only candidate who could garner enough votes would be general General Chehab.⁴⁶⁹ In a similar conversation with the UK Charge d’Affaires, Chamoun reportedly said that “he was not sure whether the General was not too much in with the opposition and might favour a solution acceptable to them, such as a temporary Government under a “Head of State”, dissolution of the Chamber and a new general election.”⁴⁷⁰ Later in the telegram, Scott describes his response,

I said that it seemed to me out of the question for there to be a general election ... for at least a year, considering what the country was going through, and that it would need at least that length of time to clean it up, recover arms and let normal life and confidence return. This might be a semi-military operation; I asked if this was why he was willing to support the General as his successor. He nodded agreement to this and added that any other President would have to rely on the army; experience of the past two months had made it doubtful how far he would be able to do so. The General would obviously ... be in the best position to command the allegiance of the army if he were President.⁴⁷¹

The following day, the US, UK, and French ambassadors met, and agreed to take a common stance in support of Chehab.⁴⁷² However, as late as 13 July, Chehab remained “non-committal in his reply” to a proposed nomination.⁴⁷³

In the early hours of 14 July 1958, army detachments surrounded the Iraqi royal palace under the command of General Abdul Karim Qassem. By the time the rest of the world woke up, a new regime was in place, with no word as to the fate of the former. President Chamoun was alerted to the news at 6:15 AM, and soon radio transmissions came in with reports that the corpses of the royal family were being dragged through the streets of Baghdad, among celebratory crowds allegedly made up of Communists and Nasserists.

⁴⁶⁹ Scott to FO, 11 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/474

⁴⁷⁰ Scott to FO, 11 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/475

⁴⁷¹ Scott to FO, 11 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/475, p. 2

⁴⁷² Scott to FO, 12 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/474-A

⁴⁷³ Scott to FO, 13 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/487

Transmissions from Cairo likewise implied a Nasserist hand in the coup, declaring it a victory for Nasser and a step towards the ultimate dream of Arab unification. In his memoirs, Chamoun writes that had a vision of what could happen in Lebanon in the immediate future: rather than the small, secretive UAR infiltration he had dealt with thus far, hostile crowds of rebels and terrorists inspired by the events in Iraq might suddenly cross over from Syria *en masse*. In the minds of the predominantly Christian loyalist camp, Lebanon was now in existential danger.⁴⁷⁴

At 8:30 AM—just a little more than two hours after learning of the events in Iraq—Chamoun summoned the American, British, and French ambassadors, and demanded they live up to their previous commitments to protect Lebanon. Chamoun informed the US ambassador that he expected an affirmative answer with 24 hours, not through words, but through actions.⁴⁷⁵ Chamoun told the men that “he expected new developments in Iraq would result in immediate and fairly large-scale desertion in Moslem elements of the Lebanese army.” Meanwhile, if the Syrians seized upon the opportunity to attack, the army would be unable to resist them.⁴⁷⁶ To the ambassadors, Chamoun’s reliance, in his assessment of the threat to Lebanon, on rebel radio broadcasts suggested that he “may regard this opportunity as his last card to play to bring about friendly military intervention in Lebanon.”⁴⁷⁷ While the UK and France felt they needed more information to make a decision, by the next day, US Marines had landed on the beaches south of Beirut.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi coup prompted a flurry of negotiations on the presidency: “More and more people are coming to believe that only General Chehab can save the situation, and there is even some talk of a bloodless coup d’etat to enable him to take over power before July 24”.⁴⁷⁸ This prospect frightened Chamoun, who requested (and was denied) a US Marine guard in response.⁴⁷⁹ However, the US Ambassador did make a point of informing

⁴⁷⁴ Chamoun (1963), pp 422-423

⁴⁷⁵ Chamoun (1963), p. 424

⁴⁷⁶ Scott to FO, 14 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/486, p. 2

⁴⁷⁷ Scott to FO, 14 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/486, p. 2

⁴⁷⁸ Scott to FO, 14 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/495

⁴⁷⁹ Scott to FO, 16 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/518

Chamoun, in front of Chehab, “that he had a powerful marine unit at his residence ready to go instantly to President Chamoun’s personal assistance”.⁴⁸⁰

Scott observed, “If indeed a coup d’etat were attempted and the President were forced to call upon the United States marines to defend him, this would have deplorable effects politically ... and it would make it virtually impossible to consider a successor to President Chamoun in the immediate future.”⁴⁸¹

The Lebanese army, which had thus far remained neutral in the conflict, veered dangerously close to defecting to the side of the opposition in the wake of the US intervention. While General Chehab did not resign, as he had previously threatened, he made it clear that he would not fully cooperate with the American forces.⁴⁸² In a dispute over a deployment to the Port of Beirut, the US Marines “had just reached the point of deciding to shoot their way to the port when agreement had been finally reached. They have already more fire-power ashore than the entire Lebanese army possesses...”⁴⁸³ Scott notes that the US Ambassador “said that he was now so fed up with General Chehab for his equivocal behavior during the advance of the marines to the port that he was looking round for another candidate as President...”⁴⁸⁴ However, the UK maintained that “it would be impossible to elect anyone with American bayonets in the streets except perhaps General Chehab, whose position had been unaffected ... by the American intervention.” However, Scott assumed that if Chehab would agree to stand, he would certainly make it conditional on a speedy US withdrawal.⁴⁸⁵ On 21 July, the UK Ambassador reported that Chehab seemed to have suffered a loss of prestige, and seemed out of the running for the imminent elections.⁴⁸⁶ Various new names – Emile Tyan, Jawad Boulos, and Joseph Hitti among them – were tossed around as new compromise candidates.⁴⁸⁷ Then, on 24 July – the original date for the election, now pushed back by a week – Chamoun came to US officials:

⁴⁸⁰ Scott to FO, 17 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/528

⁴⁸¹ Scott to FO, 16 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/518, p. 2

⁴⁸² Scott to FO, 16 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/518, p. 2

⁴⁸³ Scott to FO, 17 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/528, p. 2

⁴⁸⁴ Scott to FO, 17 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/528, pp. 2-3

⁴⁸⁵ Scott to FO, 17 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/528, p. 3

⁴⁸⁶ Middleton to FO, 21 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/540, p. 2

⁴⁸⁷ Middleton to FO, 23 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/553

“He said that on mature consideration he had come once more to the conclusion that General Chehab was the best presidential candidate despite his known shortcomings”, and urged the Western powers to help convince Chehab to stand.⁴⁸⁸ The US, French and UK ambassadors met immediately to discuss the pivot:

We are unable to analyze his motives in reverting to candidature of Chehab but are agreed, with some reluctance born of past experience, that the General still remains the most likely person to common widest support among all sections of opinion. No one else can count on full loyalty of the army, which will be essential during the post-electoral period of pacification and disarmament of the population. Moreover the General alone is immune from the accusation that he has been elected with help of American bayonets, he has recently lost some popularity but could quickly regain ground and other candidates are at best second-class material.⁴⁸⁹

By 24 July, 12,000 US Marines had landed on Lebanese soil.⁴⁹⁰ As relations between the LAF and the US Marines gradually improved, Chehab tried to stall decisive kinetic action by US forces. In particular, he promised to come up with a plan to control or oust the rebels in Basta, but Chamoun and the UK ambassador predicted “that the Lebanese army will never engage in all-out operations against the rebels.”⁴⁹¹ Indeed, Chehab’s ultimate solution for Basta was to convince the Syrians to withdraw their rebel commandos from the area.

Interestingly, after the fact, the new British ambassador suggested that “without the prompt response by the United States Government to the appeal which President Chamoun then made for help ... a pro-Nasser regime would, in the circumstances prevailing in July, have been imposed on the Lebanon,” although the autumn counterrevolution indicates “how little this would have answered the wishes of the Lebanese as a whole.”⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁸ Middleton to FO, 24 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/554

⁴⁸⁹ Middleton to FO, 24 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/554

⁴⁹⁰ Middleton to FO, 24 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/554, p. 2

⁴⁹¹ Middleton to FO, 21 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/540

⁴⁹² Crosthwaite, Annual Review for 1958, Enclosure I, 24 Apr 1959, FO 371/142208/1011, p. 3

Chehab was elected president on 31 July 1958, with 48 votes (well clear of the two-thirds majority threshold); his only opponent, Raymond Edde, received seven, and one paper was left blank. By Middleton's assessment, this 'improbable' event "came about, paradoxically, because the very completeness of the political stalemate ... revealed with sudden clarity the disagreeable alternatives facing the various parties." Chamoun worried that further delay would allow his old rival Bechara al-Khoury time to curry support; the Opposition was loath to prolong Chamoun's time in office any further.⁴⁹³ Ambassador Middleton expressed disappointment with Chehab's 'inaction' on the rebels as president-elect. The one security measure he took – civilian disarmament – in practice only applied to those under the army's remit, i.e. loyalists.⁴⁹⁴ By Middleton's assessment, this inaction was resulted in a spike in lawlessness in the second part of August: "Murder, kidnapping, ransom, torture, theft, arson, mutilation and protection money rackets flourished in Beirut and in the mountain villages, where the absence of effective control allowed the discontented, the vengeful, the fanatical and the mercenary to achieve their various ends with impunity. These sinister vendettas were accompanied by a new outbreak of terrorism in Beirut."⁴⁹⁵

Middleton continues: "In one of the few sound conclusions it has made since its arrival in Lebanon", UNOGIL had suggested that this lawlessness was unrelated to the political struggle, but rather that "many of these lawless acts (were) motivated by economic considerations". But even if the crime wave was apolitical, Middleton feared it would undermine Chehab's "precarious unity": "His inactivity thus seems to me a double-edged weapon which could easily slice off his own hopes for peaceful compromise."⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Middleton to FO, 21 Jul 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/540

⁴⁹⁴ Middleton to FO, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/598, pp. 3-4

⁴⁹⁵ Middleton to FO, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/598, p. 4

⁴⁹⁶ Middleton to FO, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134132/1015/598, p. 5

Temperment

The British military attache in 1958, Colonel Brodie, described Chehab in his annual report:

The Commander-in-Chief, General de Brigade FOUAD CHEHAB, openly despised CAMILLE CHAMOUN, then President of the Republic, and all LEBANESE Politicians. He told them, and also foreign Military Attaches, that, if troubles came, a political solution must be found, and that he would not let the Army be used to impose a solution by force. So great was the General's prestige in the Army and in the country, that President CHAMOUN could neither make him obey instructions – indeed, he hardly dared to give him any – nor get rid of him. Whether the General ... acted as an ambitious rogue or a far sighted patriot is outside my scope, though I consider that the balance of conflicting evidence is on the side of his good intentions. But, at this critical time in LEBANESE history, the Commander-in-Chief did not act as a loyal soldier.⁴⁹⁷

In judging the character of the man, we must primarily rely on other people's accounts and the evidence provided by his actions and decisions. Chehab operated outside of the spotlight. He only rarely made public speeches; as he himself explained to the nation in May 1960, "I was and I remain someone who has chosen to accomplish his mission in silence."⁴⁹⁸ However, there is a notable consistency in accounts of Fouad Chehab's personality and temperament among those who met him. The same core traits like humility, introversion, neutrality, and caution tend to be emphasised in both laudatory and critical accounts – what varies is how they are cast. The question of whether a particular trait was positive or negative is not, of course, a zero sum proposition – not least because of how little insight we have into Chehab's own mind. These personal contradictions would eventually take their toll: In his final years, Corm describes Chehab as a 'quasi-Shakespearean character', isolated, bitter, and tortured.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Brodie, Annual Report on the Lebanese Army, 24 Jan 1959, FO 371/142246/1193/2

⁴⁹⁸ Chehab, Message to the Nation, May 23, 1960

⁴⁹⁹ Corm, in Malsagne (2011), p. 29

Chehab was calm, quiet, and preferred solitude. He had little taste for ostentation, and openly despised politics and politicians. *But was he a humble, disciplined ascetic, or an aloof, dismissive aristocrat?*

By all accounts, Chehab's distaste for politics and politicians was genuine. Despite – or perhaps because of – this aversion, by 1958 he was already widely known as a man who could help negotiate, and mediate, among the elite factions.⁵⁰⁰ This reputation for even-handedness undoubtedly played a role in his election. French Ambassador Louis Roche, after a long meeting with Chehab in 1956, expressed a deep affection and respect for the General:

General Chehab is not an ordinary military chief; he almost comes across as a former head of state, because he played, several years ago, the role of defender of the Constitution, guardian of the Lebanese state. After the forced resignation of President Bechara al-Khoury, it was he who held power and preserved order while awaiting the normal election of a new President of the Republic. His prestige is even greater because – an incredible thing in the Orient – he did not seek to profit from the circumstances to carve out a personal success. His task complete, he almost returned to the shadows. He rarely shows himself.⁵⁰¹

Yet Chehab's ostensibly positive apoliticism engendered a condescension towards what he viewed as corrupt, feudal, backward practices. Chehab was so dismissive of Lebanon's so-called '*fromagiste*' elite that he isolated himself at times when the country may have been served better through cooperation. Moreover, Chehab often bypassed consultation with the country's democratic institutions and representatives in favour of his own inner circle of experts and confidantes.⁵⁰² Indeed, as the British noted, Chehab "prides himself on not being a politician at all".⁵⁰³

Boutros relates that Chehab constantly expressed astonishment at how irresponsible and self-interested some politicians seemed to be. The president felt that far too many of

⁵⁰⁰ Scott to Foreign Office, 24 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/624, p. 2

⁵⁰¹ Ambassador Roche to French Foreign Minister, 24 Feb 1956, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641

⁵⁰² Rizk (1966), p. 71

⁵⁰³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 24 Dec 1958, 371/134134/1015/667, p. 1

Lebanon's politicians focused on maintaining the approval of their followers, even at the expense of what he saw as the national interest. According to Boutros, the President voiced a profound sense "of not having been cut from the same cloth" as the other elite.⁵⁰⁴ Boutros relates the following encounter, when Chehab called him into his office after a particularly difficult cabinet meeting:

I found him standing in the centre of the room, with a very aggravated look. When he saw me, he told me – in French, the language he used with me when we were alone – "As someone who understands me, can you tell me what there is in common between those people and me? What is there in common between these people that are today called deputies and ministers and me? What am I doing here?" I felt the depth of the pain that gripped his heart, and I tried to reassure him. I told him: "*Monsieur le President de la Republique*, it is Lebanon, Lebanon in its diversity. People are different, communities are different from one another. You know and you understand that it is these very differences which constitute both Lebanon's strength and its weakness. The important thing is that they know how to come together and fill in what they lack. It seems to me that your role is precisely this: to teach them how to get along and make up for their deficiencies".⁵⁰⁵

Chehab, as we will see, would haemorrhage support from his fellow Maronites as his presidential term progressed, but he was determined to pursue the best interests of the Lebanese Christians "despite them", whether they liked it or not.⁵⁰⁶ It is easy to see why this patronizing attitude would not win many converts over to Chehabism. On the other hand, others suggest that he may not have been so aloof after all. Ambassador Roche describes Chehab as "completely devoid of the affectations that men "who do not deign" sometimes have".⁵⁰⁷

The French chargé d'affaires, recounting Chehab's inauguration, recalls a warm, smiling, and affable new President – yet one who nonetheless snuck out of the festivities early to

⁵⁰⁴ Boutros (2011), p. 75

⁵⁰⁵ Boutros (2011), p. 75

⁵⁰⁶ Boutros (2011), p. 71

⁵⁰⁷ Ambassador Roche to French Foreign Minister, 24 Feb 1956, CADN 91PO/B/42

return home to Jounieh.⁵⁰⁸ Chehab disliked the capital, and spent as much time as possible away from it in Kesrouan. Boutros describes both Chehab's personal residence in Sarba and his presidential office in Jounieh as modest, simple, and spartan. He recalls his surprise to discover, the first time he visited Chehab's office, that there were just three items on the president's desk: his pen, his glasses, and a picture of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁰⁹

If Chehab was, at times, haughty, he did not attempt to leverage this aristocratic pedigree. While Chehab's noble lineage was well known to the public, he never attempted to use it as a justification or source of legitimacy for his rule.⁵¹⁰ Chehab's public identity was not grounded in his Shihabi forebears, but rather in the military. The British Charge d'Affaires describes an encounter with Chehab in 1958, at a reception for heads of mission held jointly with Chamoun:

I asked him whether he intended to call himself Mr. Chehab or continue to use his military title, to which he said: "Oh please call me General Chehab, it gives me much more confidence." This is of course because the Army has been his whole life and he is more conscious than another distinguished General elsewhere of the selfishness and ambitions of the politicians among whom he now has to move.⁵¹¹

While in the army, Chehab had made a positive impression on the French before and after independence. Malsagne highlights how the same phrases appear again and again in French military reports on Chehab from the 1930s, highlighting "his intelligence, his zeal, his seriousness and diligence, his mastery of the French language, his strong Francophile sentiments, his extensive knowledge and his irreproachable conduct".⁵¹²

Yet for all his rebuke of the political game, Chehab did on occasion take part. For example, explaining Chehab's reluctance to carry out a certain arrest in mid-July 1958, Scott asserted that "General Chehab has an arrangement with Jumblatt laying down certain rules for

⁵⁰⁸ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 25 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/42, No. 1197

⁵⁰⁹ Boutros (2011), p. 71

⁵¹⁰ Malsagne (2011), p. 46

⁵¹¹ Scott to Hadow, 18 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/630

⁵¹² Malsagne (2011), p. 68

playing this game and mutual forbearance (except in an extremity) is one of them”.⁵¹³ This account, while unverified, is supported by the events of that summer.

Chehab, as General and as President, rarely rushed into action. Was he a patient, clear-eyed man who wanted to do things right, or lazy and indecisive? Did he keep his troops on the sidelines of civil conflict prudently, to preserve the army’s unity, or because he was weak, spineless, and craven? Far from the ‘strong man’ promised in the summer’s debate over his candidacy, the British came to see Chehab as weak. However, his integrity provided another form of control: “The President who is a decent and sensible man, if not a strong one, has in a quiet way exercised a restraining influence”.⁵¹⁴

A common criticism of Chehab, as both General and President, was his apparent hesitancy to act decisively. In particular, it was felt that in his reluctance to use force, he missed opportunities to solve various crises.⁵¹⁵ On President-elect Chehab’s failure to clear out the rebel-held Basta neighbourhood of Beirut at the end of the summer, Middleton explained to London that,

His inertia was due more to his own character and to deliberate policy than to the ambiguity of his status. By nature lazy and no trouble-shooter, he believed that so long as President Chamoun remained in office any action he himself might take in order to re-establish order, for whatever impartial reasons of security, would associate him in opposition eyes with Chamoun’s previous attempt to do the same thing for partial political reasons.⁵¹⁶

Despite the epithets, the explanation for Chehab’s rationale is fairly convincing, and does nothing to substantiate claims of ‘laziness’. As Middleton continues, Chehab feared that if he took action between his election and his inauguration, “He would thus become a wedge and not a bridge between the opposing factions, whose reconciliation he believed would

⁵¹³ Scott to FO, 14 Jul 1958, FO 371/134130/1015/494

⁵¹⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 24 Dec 1958, 371/134134/1015/667, p. 2

⁵¹⁵ See Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, pp. 5-6; “General Fu’ad Shihab Elected President of Lebanon”, Biographic Brief no. 322, US Dept of State, Office of intelligence Resources and Coordination, Aug 1 1958

⁵¹⁶ Middleton to Lloyd, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134133/1015/598, pp. 3-4

come about slow, surely and of its own accord once foreign influence could be removed”.⁵¹⁷

In any case, another UK dispatch five years later seems corrective. Discussing Chehab’s “curiously detached attitude towards government” and sparing use of president powers, it specifically *rejects* the suggestion that this behaviour derives from “a congenitally lazy disposition” as his critics claim.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, the charges of laziness and lack of will were not solely foreign critiques. Naccache also dismisses this line of criticism from within Lebanese public opinion:

Sometimes we criticise President Chehab for his slowness, his excessive patience, this hesitation in front of obstacles – which some take for a lack of spine. That is to misunderstand, I believe, the person. There is no will more stubborn than his, but he also knows that nothing sound comes from coercion and tension: that the pursuit of an endeavour requires a slow advance. What seem to be oscillations in his policy, these are oscillations of the human subject, which he manipulates and which he is trying to master.⁵¹⁹

In their later missive, the UK offer a similar explanation, and explain that much of his work takes place away from the public eye.⁵²⁰ Chehab may not have been lazy, but he was slow, stubborn, and non-confrontational.

We cannot judge the intentions which informed Chehab’s core characteristics, but their effects are observable in the Chehabist approach and its emergence. Chehab’s disdain for both politics and luxury made him a less corruptible, more even-handed arbiter at Lebanon’s summit. He deferred to experts in policy development, rather than cronies or his own self-interest. However, we see that Chehab’s penchant for solitude and privacy as the ‘Monk of Sarba’ entailed a significant loss of transparency and democracy in his governance. This would later lend fodder to accusations that the President was moving away from democracy towards authoritarianism.

⁵¹⁷ Middleton to Lloyd, 26 Aug 1958, FO 371/134133/1015/598, pp. 3-4

⁵¹⁸ Hankey to Foreign Office, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, pp. 6-7

⁵¹⁹ Naccache (1960), p. 23

⁵²⁰ Hankey to Foreign Office, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, pp. 6-7

The emergence and evolution of 'Chehabist' thought

For the first two years of President Chehab's tenure, he focused on stabilizing the country, socially, politically, and economically. As during his previous forays into Lebanese politics in 1952 and '56, his intention had been to resign from political office as soon as the imminent threat to the nation had passed. In 1958, however, he knew from the outset that it was going to take a little longer: it would be months at least before the last foreign troops left Lebanese soil, and the depth and intensity of the country's psychic wounds needed still longer to remedy. He had to repair badly-damaged relations with Lebanon's neighbour, the UAR, in order to lessen the chances of any fresh threat from that direction. He also was going to have to facilitate the reconciliation of the Lebanese elite so that fresh parliamentary elections could be held to undo the harm of the rigged 1957 vote under Chamoun.

Chehab's first two years as president, while he pursued these goals, were tinged with a kind of hesitation. This modesty of political ambitions was clarified when he announced, in July 1960, that he was resigning: Now that fair, free, and peaceful parliamentary elections had been held, Chehab assumed the country could be returned to civilian control.

After much public outcry, the President withdrew his resignation. But something fundamental had shifted in the course of those hours. As Rizk recalls, "a unique political event had just taken place: over the heads of the confessional leaders, between the soldier and the silent, dignified crowd, a link was forged, a contract signed, to the detriment of traditional parliamentary politics".⁵²¹

Thus began the second phase of Chehab's presidency. No longer viewing himself as an interim head of state, Chehab adopted a far more ambitious approach to building a stronger, more cohesive state. It is this robust version of Chehab's state building project that is properly called 'Chehabism'.

Ideological influences

What specific forces informed and transformed Chehab's political philosophy? In addition to church doctrine, Chehab was chiefly influenced by Michel Chiha's

⁵²¹ Rizk (1966), p0p. 70

constitutionalist, inclusive Lebanism, and Father Louis-Joseph Lebret's radical faith-based approach to socio-economic development.

President Chehab placed tremendous effort on the need for "objectivity and respect for the spirit ... of the Constitution. He was famous for his strict fidelity "to what the book says".⁵²² We reviewed Chiha and 'Lebanism' previously, as well as Chehab's links to the constitutionalist Destour movement of Bechara al-Khoury.⁵²³ Destour, which led the way to independence in 1943 through National Pact, was firmly rooted in Chiha's philosophy;⁵²⁴ indeed, Chiha and Khoury were brothers-in-law, and until his death, Chiha had been one of the former president's closest counsel. As Kabbara explains, Chehab's adherence to Chihism implied a "belief in the National Pact of 1943, the double identity of Lebanon as Arabic and western, the democratic style of government and finally, the liberal economic system".⁵²⁵ However, there were also differences between Chehab's approach and the Chihist view. In particular, Chehabism privileged unity over sectarian interests, and approached the problem from a more inclusive angle more accepting of Lebanon's Arabness.⁵²⁶ and Chehab was committed to dialogue, cooperation, and above all, democracy. In a speech in May 1960, he told the Lebanese people that,

National Dialogue constitutes the inescapable means, the only means, of organizing collective civic life. This is particularly true in a country like Lebanon, where democracy has an essential role between diverse communities and diverse associations. It is under the guarantee of this democratic order that the equality of all citizens is realised, in the exercise of their rights and the accomplishment of their obligations. No tyranny can then be imposed by one group upon another. Within the democratic framework, it is not possible to monopolise patriotism and establish degrees among citizens according to their loyalty to the nation. Thanks to this democratic order, national unity is built on a foundation that guarantees its perpetuity.⁵²⁷

⁵²² Boutros (2009), p. 112

⁵²³ Freiha (1980), pp. 43-45

⁵²⁴ Rizk (1966), pp. 68-69

⁵²⁵ Kabbara (1988), p. 172

⁵²⁶ Beshara (2005), pp. 100-01

⁵²⁷ Chehab, Message to the Nation, May 23, 1960

Rizk refers to Chehabism as a kind of ‘neo-Destour’.⁵²⁸ Chehab was firmly committed to the Constitution. A life in the military had instilled in him especially strong respect for the law: In 1960, as Chehabism really took form, Chehab declared, “I have an absolute faith in the parliamentary regime, convinced that it is the only one compatible with our country despite the faults one finds with it at times and of which, in the end, it is innocent. I cannot conceive of an alternative form of government for Lebanon.”⁵²⁹

From the beginning of his time in office, Chehab had a special interest in promoting balanced development across the Lebanese regions.⁵³⁰ His preliminary ideas took new vigour and direction, however, upon meeting Father Louis-Joseph Lebreton and IRFED, the *Institut International de recherche et de formation en vue du développement harmonisé*, or the International Institute for Research and Training for harmonised development. Chehab “unequivocally adopted Lebreton’s philosophy of ‘économie humaine’, the need for integrated harmonious development and ... in the priority of socio-economic contradictions over all other forms of cleavages”.⁵³¹

Chehab had long been aware that Lebanon suffered from endemic inequalities, and suspected they had their own role to play in the country’s troubles. However, he “lacked a rational and scientific image of the socio-economic realities of the country”.⁵³² So as things began to settle down after his election in 1958, Chehab “gathered his consultants and close associates and asked them to pinpoint on a map of Lebanon what facilities existed in the different Lebanese regions. No one could give an accurate picture because there were no adequate statistics or data”.⁵³³ Bishop Jean Maroun, who was a friend of Father Lebreton, suggested that Chehab remedy the problem by engaging the newly-established IRFED to undertake a survey of socio-economic conditions in Lebanon.⁵³⁴

⁵²⁸ Rizk (1966), p. 69

⁵²⁹ Chehab, Message to the Nation, May 23, 1960

⁵³⁰ Boutros (2011), p. 67

⁵³¹ Kabbara (1988), p. 172

⁵³² Kabbara (1988), p. 123

⁵³³ Kabbara (1988), p. 123

⁵³⁴ Malsagne (2003)

Father Louis-Joseph Lebret was a French Dominican priest and development economist, who in 1941 founded the 'Economy and Humanism' movement, "an attempt to create an alternative conception of economics through dialogue with philosophy, theology and the social sciences, but also built from below, with ethnographic work as its basis".⁵³⁵

Lebret had a significant impact on the development philosophy of the Catholic Church. He was the primary 'ghostwriter' of Pope Paul VI's famous *Populorum Progressio*. As McNeill and St Clair write, Lebret was "apparently the first thinker to speak explicitly about 'human development' and to relate this to a particular conception of 'economics', closely linked to ethics and values".⁵³⁶

Although Lebret, who died in 1966, did not live to see *Populorum Progressio* published, it would go on to inspire the development of 'liberation theology'. Liberation theology emerged as a radical current in Latin American Catholic thought, which proposed that true Christian faith must be rooted in solidarity with the most marginalised members of society. Christianity, it argues, should be a force for social justice. The man credited with coining the term 'liberation theology' in 1970, Gustavo Gutierrez, explicitly cites Lebret in that founding document. In his discussion of humanist approaches to development, he writes that,

Fr. L. J. Lebret strove constantly in that direction. For him, developmental economics is "the discipline covering the passage from a less human to a more human phase." The same notion is contained in that other definition of development: "having more in order to be more." This humanistic view places the notion of development in a broader context: a historical vision, in which humanity takes charge of its own destiny. But that involves a change of perspective, which we prefer to call "liberation."⁵³⁷

Lebret's radical, humanistic ideas resonated with many, including Fouad Chehab, and he left a profound legacy. Yet because so little of Lebret's work exists in English translation

⁵³⁵ McNeill & St Clair (2009), p. 37

⁵³⁶ McNeill & St Clair (2009), p. 37

⁵³⁷ Gutierrez (1970), p. 246

and “most secondary literature on his life, work and legacy is in French and Spanish”, Lebreťs influence remains broadly uncredited.⁵³⁸

The most tangible artefacts of that legacy come from Lebreťs work through IRFED. Lebreť founded IRFED in 1958 to put his development philosophy into practice. IRFED worked with governments across the world, such as Brazil, Senegal, and Timor Leste, to develop culturally-appropriate, ethical, and ‘humane’ development plans. However, their very first mission was in Lebanon under Chehab.

Father Lebreťs trip to meet the president in 1959 was not his first visit to Lebanon. As a young man, he had been deployed to Greater Lebanon within the French Mandatory forces. Lebreťs transition from soldier to priest would unfold in the country: his personal journals show that Lebreť pledged his life to God and the church in the central Lebanese city of Zahle in February 1922. While he left Lebanon shortly thereafter, he carried a special affection for the country.⁵³⁹

When Lebreť returned in 1959, he met with Chehab, the cabinet, and officials from the Ministry of planning; a contract was signed in September of that year, and the IRFED mission launched in November, with the task of “a systematic study of requirements and capabilities in Lebanon”.⁵⁴⁰ As Lebreť and Chehab developed personal and professional links, Lebreť became “the summit of the pyramid of advisers at the highest summit of the state”.⁵⁴¹ At the time of his return to Lebanon, Lebreť was particularly consumed by “the deep conviction ... that development and economic growth were well and truly two very different concepts. ... In the sole and ultimate pursuit of economic growth, he only saw the potential for social, humane, and spatial inequalities.”⁵⁴²

Lebreť understood development to mean “the passage of a defined population from a less-human state to a more human state”, as quickly and inexpensively as possible while taking into account social solidarity.⁵⁴³ vision for how elevate societies was based on several

⁵³⁸ McNeill & St Clair (2009), p. 158, n. 11

⁵³⁹ Malsagne (2003)

⁵⁴⁰ Malsagne (2003)

⁵⁴¹ Malsagne (2011), p. 246

⁵⁴² Malsagne (2011), p. 303-304

⁵⁴³ ‘Le développement harmonisé’, 17 Mar 1960, Centre IRFED-Lebreť

principles: ‘harmonised development’ should be directed, proportional, coherent, consistent, and sustainable.⁵⁴⁴ His concept was based on the idea of ‘development poles’, population and administrative centres which foster economic, technical and cultural innovations. There were four levels of ‘poles’ in Lebanon: primary poles including the major urban centres to quaternary poles made up of agglomerations of villages. Each level of pole played the same role, but on a different scale.⁵⁴⁵ In the case of Lebanon, Beirut was the sole ‘primary pole’; the secondary poles included the country’s eight major cities; and the tertiary poles corresponded to Lebanon’s administrative cazas. These were complemented quaternary poles in 41 village clusters.⁵⁴⁶

Lebret and Chehab had very similar visions of development, the former based in rational, ‘scientific’ theory, and the latter based in lived experience. Malsagne notes that “[Chehab] was nonetheless in accord with Lebret’s definition of ‘human economy’, of development and what the Dominican called true democracy, which is to say, not merely the workings of democratic policy, but “the ascension of a people in the march towards justice, the justice that they demand and they establish.”⁵⁴⁷

The content of presidential speeches and ministerial statements under Chehab shows a marked shift, accelerated by Lebret’s arrival: Whereas previously, these texts focused on “the necessity of consolidating national unity, preserving the liberal economic system, the parliamentary regime, and the confessional equilibrium. After 1959, the new leitmotiv is the linkage between the construction of a modern State and the emergence of a development policy”.⁵⁴⁸

Does this commitment to social justice proof that Chehab was really a Marxist with a Christian veneer, as some critics charged? A strong Marxist influence is clear in the

⁵⁴⁴ ‘Le développement harmonisé’, 17 Mar 1960, Centre IRFED-Lebret

⁵⁴⁵ ‘Working document on government options for general planning’, 28 Dec 1962, Centre IRFED-Lebret p. 3

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Propositions d’actions generals pour l’elaboration du plan – Introduction aux schemas’, Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, Mission IRFED-Liban, Nov 1962, Centre IRFED-Lebret, Annex 3, p. 2

⁵⁴⁷ Malsagne (2011), p. 304

⁵⁴⁸ Malsagne (2011), p. 299

writings of Father Lebret, whom Jumblatt affectionately referred to as the Red Priest.⁵⁴⁹ Chehab's thinking was broadly socialist, and he is certainly the most socialist figure to lead Lebanon.⁵⁵⁰

Yet Chehab described himself as both anti-Communist and anti-Socialist; the way to defeat these ideologies, he believed, "was by promoting social justice".⁵⁵¹ It is, at times, a fine line, but Boutros confirms earlier diplomatic reports that Chehab was adamantly anti-communist, in large part due to its incompatibility with his religious faith.⁵⁵² This assertion is substantiated by both French and British diplomatic records of conversations with Chehab. As noted previously, he often expressed concern about communism in his discussions with diplomats, before and after his election. In his valedictory dispatch, Ambassador Crosthwaite went so far as to describe Chehab as "an anti-communist of the purest water".⁵⁵³

Chehabist principles and objectives

From 1959 onwards, President Fouad Chehab's experiences, temperament, personal convictions, and ideological influences coalesced into the Chehabist project for Lebanon. Kabbara writes, "If the main objective of the 1943 National Pact Was the 'Lebanisation' of the Muslims and the 'Arabisation' of the 'Christians', the main objective of Shehabism was the Lebanonisation of both the Muslims and Christians alike".⁵⁵⁴ In practice, he explains, this 'Lebanisation' meant getting Muslims on board by granting them more of a stake in Lebanon and its independence, and persuading Christians that they needed a more inclusive national idea if the country was to survive.

In September 1959, Chehab asked for an audience with Fouad Boutros, a young lawyer who would go on to serve as minister and confidante to the president. In his memoirs, Boutros describes himself as a lifelong Chehabist, "a combatant on the front lines, with an intense desire to carry the standard of the project which he believed in and had thoroughly

⁵⁴⁹ Malsagne (2011), p. 302

⁵⁵⁰ Naccache (1960)

⁵⁵¹ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8, p. 2

⁵⁵² Boutros (2011), p. 70

⁵⁵³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 1 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/5, p. 2

⁵⁵⁴ Malsagne (2011), p. 173

convinced us of and had passed on the torch”.⁵⁵⁵ On that day, Chehab first explained that project to Boutros: He wanted to build a strong, just, and democratic state for *all* the Lebanese, upon which they could then build a cohesive Lebanese nation. Boutros writes,

President Fouad Chehab did not come into office with a fully worked-out plan, but he had a broad vision of what he was going to do for Lebanon. From the beginning, I sensed, he had faith in two things: method and objective. The former, in his mind, was the surest way to arrive at the latter: genuine citizenship and a strong, just State which would no longer be disturbed by confessional, regional, or tribal sensibilities.

This required building the State on modern principles, with agencies that were independent, supervised, accountable, and where recruitment was based on the criteria of merit and public interest, far from the clientelism and quotas which held the citizen hostage to traditional and confessional leadership, and civil servants liable to the leaderships which had arranged their employment. He estimated that the construction of this Lebanon of tomorrow, a stable and prosperous Lebanon, required taking account of the existing equilibria, but not to the detriment of fundamental national principles.⁵⁵⁶

This passage encompasses the essentials of the Chehabist project; it is somewhat trickier, however, to define the term itself.

Definitions of Chehabism

Chehabism was never an ‘official’ political ideology or political party. However, by the early 1960s, the term was widely used. Below is how the British Chargé d’Affaires in Beirut attempted to explain ‘Chehabism’ to his colleagues back in London:

The Lebanon has often assumed the role in the Middle East of introducing, in a form modified to suit local conditions, ideas born in the West. What has been termed “Chehabisme” by Georges Naccache, the politically prominent editor of the French newspaper *l’Orient*, has now emerged as a further example of this tendency, and its success here could conceivably be of value as a model even in the very different conditions prevailing in other Middle East countries. “Chehabisme” is essentially the practice by

⁵⁵⁵ Boutros (2011), p. 58

⁵⁵⁶ Boutros (2011), pp. 66-67

which the President has placed himself above religious and political disputes which, if further embittered by his participation, and fostered by the violent emotive forces from over the frontiers, could tear the country apart.⁵⁵⁷

Naccache, as we saw previously presented Chehabism as “a new political style”. He explained that the impetus for this shift was the need to prevent another national fragmentation along the lines of 1958. As we recall, Naccache wrote that the fundamental problem was “to know if we can rise to the challenge; if it can finally be proven that liberty is not a negation of the State”. As such, Chehabism was “nothing other than the ultimate attempt to prove this case – to establish a shared orientation for the nation that would not be anarchy.”⁵⁵⁸

Through its dispassionate, methodical investigation of conditions in the country and a robust state-of-the-art response, Naccache explained, Chehabism would show how a multi-communal Lebanon could be “governable and viable” as a liberal democracy.⁵⁵⁹ A similar explanation comes from another self-professed Chehabist writing during in the midst of the era, Charles Rizk:

Chehabism exists precisely in the observation or affirmation that the country’s confessional divide is not the only nor indeed the principal reason for 1958; that it is but one aspect, a consequence or side-effect of a cleavage of another order and another nature, economic and social. And we must repair this cleavage to avoid a new ‘58 and reduce our confessional divisions. This could not be accomplished by the confessional “system”.⁵⁶⁰

While these in-the-moment explanations are the most instructive, some value can be added by considering Chehabism from a more distant vantage point. From his perch in the 1980s, Hudson wrote that “Chehabism – Lebanon’s equivalent of the New Deal – was basically a moderate welfare ideology tailored to the Lebanese situation”, and represented “the first

⁵⁵⁷ Hankey to Earl of Home, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, pp. 6-7

⁵⁵⁸ Naccache (1960), p. 27

⁵⁵⁹ Naccache (1960), pp. 6-7

⁵⁶⁰ Rizk (1966), pp. 70

time the Presidency became the source of a national political philosophy”.⁵⁶¹ Kabbara approaches Chehabism in his doctoral thesis with the benefit of both insider and ‘outsider’ knowledge. He defines Chehabism as “a hegemonic project that has failed”:

A project concerned to create a Lebanese national identity based on certain strategies and programmes ... directed towards modernising the state machinery, developing the rural areas in the country, reorganising the economy and introducing a social programme to minimise the level of poverty and the discrepancy in the distribution of income and wealth among the different social classes.⁵⁶²

According to Kabbara, Chehab believed Lebanon’s confessional political balance would not last indefinitely.⁵⁶³ In order to guarantee the country’s future, it would be necessary to cultivate a “collective will” around a “new vision of Lebanon and Lebanese society as a modern, rational, fair state and society.”⁵⁶⁴ As such, “The main task for Shehab was first, to form the new vision; second, to construct the basic infrastructure for its realisation including reforming the administration and creating necessary developmental bodies; and finally, to rally enough political and popular support around it”.⁵⁶⁵

Nothing in Kabbara’s understanding is incompatible with the explanations of the Chehabists themselves. The primary difference is a shift in emphasis: like Hudson, Kabbara’s definition focuses more on process than outcome. Rizk and Naccache both provide more emphasis on the philosophy of Chehabism and less on explanations of its actual processes – gaps which the later writers may help to fill. While Naccache, Rizk, and other contemporary accounts stress the need to avoid a replay of 1958, Kabbara and Hudson in 1980s viewed Chehabism from the midst of the very war the Chehabists had feared.

Even if the Chehabist mission failed, it remains key to understanding the dynamics of that process. In particular, this mission for Lebanon – to avoid war and possible annihilation –

⁵⁶¹ Hudson (1985), p. 297

⁵⁶² Kabbara (1988) p. 2-4

⁵⁶³ Kabbara (1988), p. 122

⁵⁶⁴ Kabbara (1988), p. 17

⁵⁶⁵ Kabbara (1988), p. 122-23

was the primary incentive on offer for the Maronite elite, who were less concerned about national development. Errors in the design of both mission and process, of course, contributed to Chehabism's failure overall. As such, our definition attempts to encompass both:

Chehabism was a radical political project designed to transition Lebanon from a precarious, divided society into a stable, cohesive whole under a 'new National Pact'. The primary indicators of this new Pact's success would be the achievement of national unity and equality, through 1) The formation of a universal, inclusive Lebanese identity; and 2) Even socio-economic development and modernisation across Lebanon's communities and regions. These aims could only be achieved through a rational, balanced, scientific, sustained, and ethical approach.

The first desired outcome of the Chehabist approach, thus, was **national unity**: a cohesive state built by unifying Lebanon's disparate segments. In order to achieve this, of course, the cleavages dividing those segments had to be stripped of their political salience. This would require the elimination of segmental autonomy: If people were to feel Lebanese first, Lebanon had to be accountable to them in turn.

But If Lebanon's institutions were going to effectively serve all its people, they would need to be rationalised, reformed, and expanded. This would require our second outcome, **modernisation**. And neither unity nor a 'modern' state could be built without a foundation of **social justice** and equality.⁵⁶⁶ These outcomes, in the eyes of Chehab, were closely correlated with each other as well as effective governance; there could be no unity without true equality.⁵⁶⁷

Modernisation and Le Social

The term '*Le Social*' was coined by Chehab personally, and represents his own social philosophy, developed under the influence of Father Lebret. The premise at the heart of *Le Social* was this: If the socio-economic gaps between communities and geographic regions could be narrowed, and wealth more evenly distributed (while remaining within the bounds

⁵⁶⁶ Naccache (1960), p. 26

⁵⁶⁷ Chehab, Independence Day Address, 21 Nov 1961

of a liberal-democratic system), future political and social upheavals would be far less likely to occur.⁵⁶⁸

IRFED suggested that development had several objectives, notably to quantify and better exploit the human and material resources of underdeveloped countries; to enable more robust and accurate planning; to improve administration and encourage production in response to new imperatives; to redirect scientific and technological innovation towards the problems of low-income countries; to increase exports from under-developed nations; and “to grow the volume and regularity of the flow of capital introduced under conditions suitable in under-developed countries”.⁵⁶⁹

Through his interactions with the IRFED mission and Lebreton, Chehab had grown increasingly convinced that socioeconomics were the true sources of Lebanon’s superficially ‘sectarian’ conflict. His reluctance to intervene in 1958 was grounded in a suspicion that the state’s own failures had pushed Lebanese Muslims into the arms of Nasser: “For him, the solution must come from a new social policy, not arms.”⁵⁷⁰

As such, he launched a raft of measures “all with the same purpose of improving efficiency and minimizing the harmful impact on administration of personal disputes and prejudices.”⁵⁷¹ The Foreign Office expresses surprise in 1963 at the uncharacteristic enthusiasm the usually reserved Chehab demonstrated for the project. A man famous for working slowly, carefully, and subtly was determined to see development and social reform be achieved as soon as possible.⁵⁷²

A key component, or complement, to *Le Social* was modernisation. Chehab’s interest in efficient, less corrupt, and more meritocratic governance predisposed him towards modernisation efforts to begin with. However, he also believed that modernisation was essential for the achievement of true communal equality and social justice, as well as fostering a sense of national pride. With such a daunting task, General Chehab believed it

⁵⁶⁸ Kabbara (1988), p. 182

⁵⁶⁹ ‘Propositions d’actions générales pour l’élaboration du plan – Introduction aux schémas’, Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, Mission IRFED-Liban, Nov 1962, Centre IRFED-Lebreton, p. 8

⁵⁷⁰ Malsagne (2011), p. 174

⁵⁷¹ Hankey to Earl of Home, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, p. 5

⁵⁷² Hankey to Earl of Home, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, p. 5

was necessary to implement what Verdeil calls “authoritarian modernisation”, the top-down imposition of new norms and practices on society.⁵⁷³

In the ‘Chehabist’ context, modernisation should be understood as the rationalisation of government and society by developing, transforming, or replacing traditional institutions and technologies under the influence of new science and knowledge.⁵⁷⁴ Chehab was convinced of the need to ‘rationalise’ Lebanese capitalism in particular. Lebanon’s economic system had grown ever more anarchic in the years since independence, but this shift had been masked by its ability to create tremendous wealth.⁵⁷⁵ As Naccache describes,

The conclusions of the IRFED Mission’s investigation... show that we are on the brink of rupturing our equilibrium. They are enough of a blow to silence our champions of liberalism, the theoreticians of unlimited laissez faire whose only demand of the state is that it be perpetually absent. This anarchy, built as a system, would inevitably drive us into catastrophe.

The whole Lebanese economy, our whole system of investments, our entire fiscal policy, all our social legislation has to be completely rethought and redone. This means a collective effort by the nation, and firstly a collection of burdens and sacrifices which the privileged classes must be the first to accept.⁵⁷⁶

The Chehabists believed that the economy had to be diversified if there was any hope of maintaining stability in the near to medium term. The Lebanese population was expected to double over the next decade and a half, reaching 2.5 million inhabitants by 1975. Although Lebanon was reasonably prosperous in the late 1950s and early ‘60s, that prosperity derived largely from the banking and services sectors. Such a narrow base supplied a dubious foundation for population growth on such a dramatic scale.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷³ Verdeil (2009), p. 81

⁵⁷⁴ This definition is adapted from Salem (1973), p. 2 and Kabbara (1988), p. 182

⁵⁷⁵ Traboulsi (2014), p. 141

⁵⁷⁶ Naccache (1960), p. 27

⁵⁷⁷ Naccache (1960), p. 27

While modernisation was a key instrument of social justice and a more balanced economy, Chehab also believed that these shifts were necessary in order to foster national unity. On Independence Day, 1962, the president explained,

The work of development which takes place in the economic and social domains does not only look to raise each person's quality of life, but to dissolve all Lebanese in the melting pot of a single society whose national unity must be based not so much on coexistence or the partnership of different categories of the population as upon the conviction of every citizen to be an integral part of a single people and to be strictly loyal to a single homeland. This is the only way national unity can take on its noblest meaning and its most spirited force.⁵⁷⁸

Coexistence was no longer enough to ensure Lebanon's future. President Chehab did not want to see Muslims and Christians living peacefully side by side, their elite cooperating to make sure everyone's voice was reflected in policy. He wanted the political salience of sect to be stripped away all together, so that Muslims and Christians lived together as equals, and believed that modernisation and social justice were the only means of achieving this end.

National Unity

In his very first speech in August 1958, with the conflict still active, Chehab praised the Pact as the guarantor of Lebanon's prosperity and success and vowed to apply all of his energy to securing its restoration.⁵⁷⁹ Similarly, in his inaugural address a month later, Chehab specifically referred to the National Pact as Lebanon's "unwritten Constitution" and called upon the public to respect it.⁵⁸⁰ As his position evolved over the following months and years, Chehab would come to question the enduring value of the Pact's content, if not its symbolic worth. After all, the Pact – a consociational act founding Lebanon's consociational political system – was incompatible with his vision of non-segmented national unity.

⁵⁷⁸ Chehab, Independence Day Address, 22 Nov 1962

⁵⁷⁹ Chehab, Message to the Nation, 4 Aug 1958

⁵⁸⁰ Chehab, Inaugural address, 23 Sep 1958

Before his contact with IRFED, Chehab, much like his predecessors, understood ‘national unity’ as “basically the need of the Lebanese to live together in one nation.”⁵⁸¹ However, even then, there was a distance between Chehab’s view and the mainstream. This may be illustrated by comparing Chehab’s inaugural address with Charles Helou’s understanding of National Unity, articulated one month later. Chehab spoke of closing the gap between “different members of the Lebanese family”,⁵⁸² whereas Helou repeatedly stresses that Lebanon cannot escape its differences. **Helou’s unity is essentially consociational**: what matters is separating the natural differences from the false, and how so much more unites the country than separates it. Helou writes, “We can no more escape from our differences than our solidarity or our union. In Lebanon – among so many different opinions – this is what unifies: here is the political truth. Among so many paths, the route which leads to reconciliation is the right one.”⁵⁸³

However, as Lebret’s message of social justice and equality seeped in, Chehab’s thinking evolved: Living together was not enough; the Lebanese needed to be a single people if the country were to flourish and avoid further bloodshed. In turn, he came to believe that “the 1943 Pact was not viable without the achievement of social justice”.⁵⁸⁴ According to Kabbara, the Chehabist approach viewed national unity as the end result of a *new* National Pact, which would support the “citizenship and fusion of all the Lebanese in one nation as the ultimate discursive nature of the Pact.”⁵⁸⁵

In public addresses later on in his presidency, Chehab would employ the 1958 crisis rhetorically, not to discuss the perils of division but to celebrate the unity which allowed the country to find an exit. He cast the crisis as a harrowing shared national experience, only overcome the country’s unanimous will to preserve their shared way of life.⁵⁸⁶

In a speech shortly before the 1960 general elections, Chehab stressed the power of democracy and urged citizens to cast their votes on the basis of integrity, competence,

⁵⁸¹ Kabbara (1988), p. 174

⁵⁸² Chehab, Inaugural address, 23 Sep 1958

⁵⁸³ Helou, “For National Reconciliation”, 5 Oct 1958, reproduced in CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1246

⁵⁸⁴ Jisr (2000), p. 142

⁵⁸⁵ Kabbara (1988), pp. 174-75

⁵⁸⁶ Chehab, Message to the Nation, May 23, 1960

dedication, and intelligence. However, he warned, even these qualities were insufficient if candidates did not meet the “primordial condition” of “unshakeable faith in national unity”.

⁵⁸⁷ National unity, he explained, was what enabled a country to preserve its independence:

No country’s history more than Lebanon’s demonstrates that this unity is the first foundation and the sole lasting guarantee of its independence. Without the unity of the Lebanese people, Lebanon would not have known independence; and without unity, nothing of this independence would remain.⁵⁸⁸

Over his six-year tenure, Chehab repeatedly emphasised that every person shared in a collective responsibility; if unity and equality were to be achieved, everyone had to help, and many people would have to make sacrifices. He frequently called out the youth in particular to engage themselves in his project. While the message did not resonate with everyone, Chehab was able to mobilise many young people among a new, reform-oriented generation, whose lucid patriotism was based on his vision of the ‘State of Independence’.⁵⁸⁹

Chehab’s project in his own words

On 21 November 1960, Chehab delivered an Independence Day address which was rather different from his previous speeches. It was his first public address since withdrawing his resignation the previous summer, and demonstrates the more robust plan Chehab adopted as he moved into the second phase of his presidency; indeed, this speech may be seen as the public “initiation” of that second phase.⁵⁹⁰ The latter half of Chehab’s speech, which outlines his vision for the country at the start of this new era, is worth reproducing in full:

The State has been engaged in this phase for some time, with the aim of providing the Lebanese nation with principles of modern organisation in the social, economic and cultural domains, in a spirit of perfect impartiality on the part of those who shoulder the major responsibilities of this work.

⁵⁸⁷ Chehab, Message to the Nation, May 23, 1960

⁵⁸⁸ Chehab, Message to the Nation, May 23, 1960

⁵⁸⁹ Rizk (1966), p. 114

⁵⁹⁰ Traboulsi (2014), p. 139

The independence which we enjoy would lose much of its splendour and its sacred character if we came to see it as a pure symbol, if we accepted it as a simple end and if we did not use it for the public good.

The administrative reform whose foundations we consolidated these past two years and which will soon bear fruits, cannot be accomplished without another more important and more necessary reform – which is more difficult to achieve because it bears directly on Lebanese public life – to establish itself on a basis worthy of an advanced people in a century when the fundamental problem is the problem of the social.

All administrative reform would be of a limited value if it were not accompanied by comprehensive social reform.

Economic prosperity must not mask the deficiencies, the privations, the poverty that diminishes its reality and benefits. All the Lebanese must understand the necessity of efforts to raise up their less-developed brothers and to put an end to a misery which is legally inadmissible in an advanced, prosperous society, and to move to help one another to end it by assuming complete and total responsibility.

The phase through which the country is moving – in order to build a new society, a phase which implies a narrow cooperation between people and authorities, which requires the sacrifices on the part of some and patience on the part of others – this phase is no less important than that which led to independence.

The path is hard, but is it not true that the path to the summit is always the hardest? We all wish for a better Lebanon, with an honourable government in the realms of justice, discipline, and security.

But this hope cannot be realised unless every Lebanese acts in a spirit of solidarity, convinced that every effort in the interest of all is in the end a profitable venture for himself.

Recognizing deprivation already gets us halfway there, the other half being made up of serious, shared, and sincere work.

Lebanese, on this anniversary of the independence which it has been said was taken for itself rather than granted, as I see myself expressing the hopes and aspirations of Lebanon, I say that true independence is built – after belief in God – upon effort, exhaustion, patience, sacrifices, virtue, knowledge, discipline, on all these civic qualities without which there is neither independence nor state.

Lebanese, Lebanism involves no distinction nor privilege. One Lebanese is not superior to another, except by means of honest labour. Your love and your sincerity for Lebanon and the protection of your independence are an ongoing endeavour. Your independence is a task for every one of you, every day.

Long live Lebanon! ⁵⁹¹

The above represents the best account we have of the Chehabist project as it shifted into full gear: Chehabism sought to modernise and reform the country so it could be just, secure, efficient, and truly free. However, this could only be done, in the president's view, by ensuring that everyone shared in Lebanon's prosperity and freedom. In order to narrow the socio-economic divide and promote meaningful equality, real solidarity – rooted in work, commitment, and sacrifice – was needed. To preserve and honour Lebanon and its independence, the better off members of society had to genuinely accept other groups as equally Lebanese and entitled to the privileges that implies.

For Chehab, national unity, development, and social justice were symbiotic, with full realisation of each aim contingent upon the others; all were linked to “the most precious Lebanese value”, the preservation of liberty.⁵⁹²

Conclusions

As we shall see over the course of this thesis, one of Chehabism's greatest flaws is the extent to which the project relied upon the personal leadership of Fouad Chehab. In addition to Chehab's perceived wisdom, power, and patriotism, as Naccache effuses, his identity itself could be a unifying factor:

⁵⁹¹ Chehab, Independence Day address, Nov 21, 1960

⁵⁹² Chehab Independence Day Address, 21 Nov 1961

Few Maronites walk our streets who have such pure Arab blood in their veins. This Arab Prince who governs us, whose father was named Toufic and grandfather Hassan, who is at the same time a pure sheikh of Kesrouan, full of humour and reason, is he not the perfect symbiosis of Islam and Christianity? Does he not represent, physically speaking, the transconfessionalism of the Lebanese problem?⁵⁹³

At the same time, Naccache warns that “the fault that would be fatal would be to assume that a man can indefinitely stand in for a nation”.⁵⁹⁴ Yet he offers no solutions for dislocating Chehabism away from the man himself, and indeed, none was ever found. Chehab’s character and background allowed him to lead such a disruptive project because he, to an extent, *became* Lebanon’s factor of cohesion.

Moreover, even in the midst of the Chehabist era, some felt the project did not go far enough. Charles Rizk was an ardent Chehabist, but he was highly critical of what he perceived as Chehab’s unwillingness to take the project to its logical conclusion and effect true *political* reform.⁵⁹⁵ He believed that Chehabism “carries the seeds of a political program which can, and must, become a national doctrine”; once politicised, according to Rizk, Chehabism would return a sense of purpose to the Lebanese that they had lacked since independence. “Chehabism is, in a way, a ‘new frontier’”.⁵⁹⁶

Naccache connects this reluctance to tackle political reform to Chehab’s commitment to Lebanon’s constitutional documents, as part of what he calls “the dialectic of the Chehabist project”:

On the one hand, a strict concern with constitutional legality, a deep conviction that a parliamentary regime in Lebanon is necessary. On the other hand, this repulsion for political wheeling and dealing, this bitter recognition of the necessity, in order to succeed to the end, to go through the very men who have debased Authority and degraded Power.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹³ Naccache (1960), p. 25

⁵⁹⁴ Naccache (1960), p. 27

⁵⁹⁵ Rizk (1966), p. 71

⁵⁹⁶ Rizk (1966), p. 71

⁵⁹⁷ Naccache (1960), p. 25

In a similar vein, Kabbara suggests that the abolition of political sectarianism was beyond the scope of Chehab's "constitutionalist approach". Rather, he sought to "correct the failures of the sectarian system by injecting it with large doses of economic and social justice."⁵⁹⁸ Others, however, take Chehab's failure to challenge the system more cynically: in the end, political sectarianism could work in his advantage. Beshara describes the Chehab regime as "guided by the desire to exploit the confessional system for its own ends rather than challenge its legitimacy".⁵⁹⁹

There is another, simpler explanation for Chehab's reluctance to radically alter Lebanon's political system: he felt that the groundwork had not yet been laid for such a transition. Chehab's speeches demonstrate a clear will to see the confessional system dismantled and a new national pact brought into being; given that the written constitution presented political confessionalism as a stop-gap solution, this goal would not have been at odds with a 'constitutionalist approach'.

But Rizk was perhaps a revolutionary at heart— a man ready to tear the consociational system down and build something new. Chehab, in his misplaced belief he could 'reform' a consociation into a majoritarian democracy, saw a different, less-confrontational route to the realisation of his vision of a modern, stable, egalitarian, and proud new Lebanon.

'Ni vainqueur, ni vaincu'— 'no victor, no vanquished': as we shall see in the following chapter, this was the slogan Chehab adopted in his second attempt to form a government in 1958, after the first provoked a brief but chilling counterrevolution. Christians felt that the first line-up effectively granted 'victory' to the rebels at their expense; after several ugly weeks, a solution was found through compromise and the even division of portfolios among the super-elite.

The philosophy of 'no victor, no vanquished' underpinned Chehab's approach to politics thereafter. But it is notably another consociational act. Thus, from the very outset of Fouad Chehab's presidency, we see consociationalism and Chehabism clash, with conflict the inevitable result.

⁵⁹⁸ Traboulsi (2014), p. 141

⁵⁹⁹ Beshara (2005), p. 76

4. Phase One: Reform, Recovery, and Reconciliation

In his first address to the nation in August 1958, President-Elect Fouad Chehab vowed that Lebanon would emerge from the dark days of that summer “more confident in itself, more solidly established, and with its position reinforced”. His priority, he explained, would be the restoration of unity and stability in line with the 1943 National Pact, to ensure a peaceful, prosperous, and dignified existence for Lebanon. Even in that early speech, he stressed that “science, order, and equality” must prevail across Lebanese society in order to secure that better future.⁶⁰⁰

From the outset President Chehab had in mind a specific framework for his obligations to the country. Two years later, on 20 July 1960, Chehab announced his resignation as the final piece of that mission came into place. A new, expanded, more representative Lebanese parliament had been elected by popular vote; two days prior, this new chamber had convened and elected a Speaker of House. This meant, by Chehab’s rationale, that the parliament was ready to elect a new, civilian president to take his place. His services were no longer required.

These core objectives were articulated by Chehab in his resignation address. They included:

1. Recovery from the 1958 crisis, involving:
 - a. The withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanese soil
 - b. Re-establishing a spirit of harmony, unity, and cooperation among the Lebanese communities
 - c. Repairing strained relations with Arab states
 - d. Restarting the Lebanese economy
2. Introducing a strong legislative foundation for efficient, clean, and effective governance
3. Creating a larger, more representative parliament, and holding elections as soon as the domestic climate allowed them to take place freely and fairly.⁶⁰¹

⁶⁰⁰ Chehab, Address to the nation, Aug 4, 1958

⁶⁰¹ Chehab, Resignation address, 20 July 1960

Chehab's 'mission' in the first phase of his presidency, from his election until the resignation attempt, was dominated by specific targets in Lebanon's post-1958 recovery. Yet these objectives, with their emphasis on national unity, harmony, and modern reform, represent the first manifestation of Chehabism. During this period of crisis and its aftermath, Chehab time and again grudgingly accepted consociational solutions. As we will see over the following pages, the Chehabist-Consociational dualism generated significant tension, as Chehab's imperative to reconcile Lebanon's communities conflicted with his vision for Lebanon's future.

In this chapter, we will examine how the phase unfolded, explore the key moments when consociational imperatives clashed with Chehabism, and make sense of how they were resolved.

The Counter-Revolution

Although considerable attention has been paid to Lebanon's 1958 civil war, less is paid to the brief 'counter-revolution' which followed it in September and October. This is understandable: the unrest was shorter, the body count lower. But the counter-revolution was, in some ways, more ominous, as it took on a more overtly sectarian tenor. The counter-revolution was the early stirrings of the conflict everyone had been desperate to keep the summer's crisis from devolving into, but inverted: now, Christians were the rebels, and Muslims attempted to defend the status quo. The counter-revolution, moreover, was a predictable consociational outcome of a coalition that failed to encompass a broad enough cross section of the elite.

Before the counter-revolution got underway, Lebanon had been slowly inching back toward normal life, but not all signals were auspicious. While "military hostilities" had largely ceased, the British Embassy reports that lawlessness and terrorism continued unabated for much of August.⁶⁰²

In late August 1958, with an eye to the imminent arrival of a new president, both the Opposition and Loyalist camps issued incompatible 'manifestoes': The Opposition

⁶⁰² Scott to Secretary of State, 23 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/628, p. 1

demanding that a new government be formed from the rebel leaders and supporters, while Loyalists announced that they would boycott any government which included any members of the Opposition whatsoever.⁶⁰³

Relief came, albeit briefly, when the Opposition finally lifted its general strike. For the duration of the summer, the strike – as much as any actual fighting – had paralyzed commercial activity in Lebanon. The strike was lifted from 11am on the morning of 4 September. Since Chehab's election, this was the clearest sign that the summer's crisis really was coming to an end, and the immediate resurgence of public life boosted morale nation-wide. The moment was charged with optimistic symbolism: The British *chargé d'affaires* at the time reported that,

The souks suddenly overflowed, not only with would-be purchasers, but with sightseers also; the newspapers were filled with photographs of smiling merchants sweeping out their shops, laying out their wares, hanging out their signs, or wrestling with huge padlocks, ostensibly rusted through four-months' disuse.⁶⁰⁴

The optimism continued apace as shortly thereafter, the loyalist Christian Kataeb forces accepted – in principle – to surrender their weapons to the government, “and actually went so far as to hand in one or two of their more obsolete or defective firing-pieces”.⁶⁰⁵ As September progressed, the end of the summer's civil war seemed within reach.

Another sign that things were moving forward came when President Camille Chamoun registered a new political party in order to consolidate the Loyalist parliamentary strength ahead of the change in regime.⁶⁰⁶ Although Chehab entered the presidency with broad popular support, he was always going to be at a disadvantage to Chamoun among Maronites. As intensely as the opposition despised the outgoing president, many Christians saw Chamoun as Lebanon's greatest champion. In his final address as president, Chamoun promised his supporters that this was, by no means, a farewell address: From now on, he

⁶⁰³ Scott to Secretary of State, 23 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/628, p. 2

⁶⁰⁴ Scott to Secretary of State, 23 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/628, p. 2

⁶⁰⁵ Scott to Secretary of State, 23 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/628, p. 3

⁶⁰⁶ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 11 Sep 1958, reproduced in FO 371/134135/1016/2

would fight alongside them.⁶⁰⁷ The French *chargé d'affaires* recalls how a throng of Christian protestors swarmed his motorcade en route to Chehab's inauguration, cheering France and crying out, "*We don't want Chehab! Down with Chehab! Long live Chamoun!*"⁶⁰⁸

As Commander-in-Chief of the army, all summer Chehab had resisted Chamoun's desire to suppress the insurrection by force. As we have seen, relations between the men were fraught, as Chamoun oscillated between wanting to give Chehab the presidency or a demotion. The Loyalist Christian public was similarly ambivalent, but like everyone in the country, they wanted the crisis to be over. They wanted to support the army chief. If Chehab had assuaged Christian fears with a "good faith" first government, perhaps he could have eventually edged out Chamoun as a Christian leader. But it was not to be.

On 19 September, armed men seized the taxi carrying Fouad Haddad, a forty-something journalist and prominent Kataeb member, on his way home from the office. Haddad, who wrote for the Kataeb mouthpiece *al-Amal* and regularly edited Pierre Gemayel's speeches and declarations, had pseudonymously published a biting satire of Gamal Abdel Nasser the previous day.⁶⁰⁹

As news of the kidnapping spread, Gemayel demanded that the rebel leaders take responsibility for Haddad's safe return. However, they protested that while they regretted the incident, they knew nothing about it and could not help. With little recourse, Christians attempted to gain leverage by kidnapping several Muslims, but this move only provoked a spiral of tit for tat partisan abductions. After a final appeal by Raymond Edde, the Christian leadership saw no option other than to go to the streets.⁶¹⁰

The Kataeb called for a fresh general strike, and re-erected the barricades that had only so recently come down. After word came in that Haddad had been murdered, Christian protestors congregated in Beirut, in the mountains, and at the Patriarchate; they angrily defaced posters of Chehab in Jounieh; and soon, they began to confront those perceived as

⁶⁰⁷ Chamoun, Address to the Nation, 18 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1185

⁶⁰⁸ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 25 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/42, No. 1197

⁶⁰⁹ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 25 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1198, p. 3

⁶¹⁰ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 25 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1198, pp. 3-4

members of the Muslim opposition.⁶¹¹ “Their anger,” wrote the French embassy, “has pushed them out of their apathy; they are finally finding the courage to assert themselves in the face of the insurgents”.⁶¹²

The conflict had entered a new phase: “In the short history of the Lebanese Republic the Christians had not before resorted to violence of this kind”.⁶¹³ Over the following days, “the steadily-increasing number of kidnappings of Christians by Moslems and of Moslems by Christians indicated that sectarian strife, of a kind which had on the whole been averted during preceding months, was making its first serious appearance”.⁶¹⁴

It was against this backdrop that President Chehab formally assumed office. Despite Saeb Salam’s insistent denials, the Kataeb continued to hold the opposition responsible for Haddad’s murder, and Gemayel threatened to invade and destroy the rebel stronghold of Basta.⁶¹⁵ In the face of mounting violence, the army command re-imposed a national curfew and declared that they would shoot anyone carrying weapons on sight.⁶¹⁶ The situation had gotten so thoroughly out of hand that the British chargé d’affaires believed martial law would be necessary if Chehab failed to quickly form an acceptable unity government.⁶¹⁷

Chehab formed a cabinet, but it was arguably not a ‘unity’ government and it was manifestly not acceptable to all sides. His choice for prime minister was Rachid Karami, the outspoken Sunni opposition leader from Tripoli who had held the post earlier in the decade. He was one of a number of major communal leaders who had lost his parliamentary seat in the previous year’s rigged elections. As an active rebel leader during the summer’s crisis, the Loyalists at first categorically opposed Karami’s nomination. However, in the weeks leading up to his appointment, Karami moderated his public positions; this,

⁶¹¹ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 25 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1198, p. 4

⁶¹² Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 25 Sep 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1198, p. 5

⁶¹³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 2

⁶¹⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 4

⁶¹⁵ Scott to Secretary of State, 23 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/628, p. 7

⁶¹⁶ Scott to Foreign Office, 24 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/624, p. 1

⁶¹⁷ Scott to Foreign Office, 24 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/624, p. 2

combined with intensive behind-the-scenes negotiations promising a balanced cabinet, had persuaded the Christians to remove their veto.⁶¹⁸

Karami's first government was composed of eight men: four Christians, three Muslims, and one Druze. Although Chehab had successfully convinced Karami to exclude the more radical rebel factions, the cabinet's political composition strongly favoured the former opposition, with three leading opposition members, two moderate opposition members, and three independents.⁶¹⁹ In retrospect, it seems obvious that the Loyalists, who had already compromised on Karami, would reject the line-up, but the UK at the time described it as "non-provocative" and a "pretty satisfactory peace-making cabinet".⁶²⁰

To the angry Loyalist forces already in the streets, this first government seemed to grant a retroactive and unjustified victory to the rebels. Meanwhile, before the new government had even been approved by the Chamber, it embarked on a purge of top-ranking security officials who had been loyal to Chamoun.⁶²¹ The Christians felt "not merely deceived and disappointed, but betrayed".⁶²²

The ex-Loyalists targeted their anger at the Christian members of Karami's cabinet, pressuring them to resign their posts. This strategy was moderately effective, and coincided with one of the independent ministers, Charles Helou, suddenly finding himself 'too sick' to carry on with his ministerial duties.⁶²³ Karami, meanwhile, attempted to defend his cabinet in increasingly desperate public statements, and to portray the former Loyalists as working against the restoration of peace.⁶²⁴ By early October, his language was almost threatening, promising to "crack down on all subversive activity and every violation of public order"; after months of Muslim-led rebellion and civil disobedience, Karami's

⁶¹⁸ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 18 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/622

⁶¹⁹ Scott to Foreign Office, 25 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/626

⁶²⁰ Scott to Foreign Office, 25 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/626

⁶²¹ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 3 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1223, p. 3

⁶²² Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655

⁶²³ Scott to Foreign Office, 29 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/629

⁶²⁴ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 3 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1223, p. 2

newfound commitment to law and order struck many Christians as fairly rich, and the number of strikers swelled.⁶²⁵

Pierre Gemayel asserted that the Loyalists, despite being the true ‘victors’ of the summer’s war, had agreed to the ‘no victor, no vanquished’ formula as a means towards peace. This conciliatory gesture, in his opinion, had been rather poorly repaid. By early October, the Kataeb’s *Al-Amal*, one of the only papers still being distributed, stated that “eighty percent” of the country’s population believed the cabinet should resign or be expanded to include former Loyalists.⁶²⁶

While President Chehab indicated a willingness to do the latter, he insisted that any enlargement take place after the vote of confidence.⁶²⁷ The former Loyalists, in the meantime, refused to vote until changes had been made. As explained by Loyalist MP Jean Aziz, reconciliation had to come first because, without it, the government would have failed in its first and most important task – a state of affairs that was not very ‘confidence’-inspiring.⁶²⁸

As Kataeb ran the militant dimension of the counter-revolution, Chamoun ran its political side from his home in the mountains.⁶²⁹ Normal travel in and out of Beirut was impeded by the reinforcement of Christian barricades and various forms of civil disobedience: elderly Christian women lying prostrate on the road,⁶³⁰ and “gangs of children armed with sacks of stones”.⁶³¹

In the first week of October, Helou, who was the new (infirm) Information Minister under Karami, penned two editorials, which were published by every major paper across the French and Arabic-language press.⁶³² Helou cites this act of solidarity and reconciliation among Lebanese journalists as an inspiration for the country as a whole, and calls for unity:

⁶²⁵ Government Communique, 27 Sep 1958, reproduced in CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1223

⁶²⁶ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 3 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1223, p. 4

⁶²⁷ Scott to Foreign Office, 29 Sep 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/634, p. 2

⁶²⁸ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 10 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1245, p. 4

⁶²⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 3 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/641

⁶³⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 3 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/641

⁶³¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 4 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/642

⁶³² Roche to French Foreign Minister, 10 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1246

We are, based on our structure, a country of inevitable divergences and necessary Union. We have only the choice between fraternity and death. It is this shared conviction among the Lebanese that explains the last presidential election and the choice of the man who had become, for all of us, the very symbol of National Unity and the natural arbiter of our conflicts and our difficulties.⁶³³

President Chehab engaged in intensive negotiations between the ex-Loyalists and the ex-Opposition, whose roles had now reversed. The negotiations were just beginning to yield fruit on both sides when, suddenly, the crisis reignited: On 8 October, the mutilated corpses of two Muslims, who had been abducted several days prior, were left in front of a Beirut mosque near the home of Saeb Salam. Upon the discovery, “an angry crowd of over a thousand gathered at once, most of them armed, and were with difficulty restrained by Saeb Salam in person” from storming the neighbouring Christian district of Achrafieh.⁶³⁴ A fresh spiral of kidnappings, murders, and acts of terror was underway.

Sectarian killings “became almost daily events”, reaching a crescendo on 12 October when, in addition to half a dozen other murders, “seven milk vendors in a car were stopped by Christian thugs near Tripoli; the only Christian among them was told to take the car and drive off; the six Moslems were shot dead on the spot”.⁶³⁵

People were angry, and they were exasperated. By this time, the UK Ambassador reports that “there is a general feeling that things have reached the point where any decision by [Chehab] would be acceptable.... It remains to be seen whether General Chehab will make up his mind to act”.⁶³⁶ His French counterpart likewise records his impression that the Lebanese public losing faith that ‘national unity’ could be restored at all without “rapid action” on the part of the president. Even Prime Minister Karami informed the media that, “From this point on, the situation is entirely in the hands of the Chief of State.”⁶³⁷

⁶³³ Helou, “For National Reconciliation”, 5 Oct 1958, reproduced in CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1246

⁶³⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 9 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/648

⁶³⁵ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 6

⁶³⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 10 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/648

⁶³⁷ Gemayel, quoted by Roche, 10 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1245, pp. 4-5

Karami attempted to resign, and it later emerged that Chehab had, at that point, sought to form something along the lines of a military government (albeit under the stewardship of a civilian prime minister, Nazim Akkari). But Karami's supporters, hearing the news, deemed their leader's resignation wholly unacceptable and went to the street to demonstrate as much.⁶³⁸ "Here was another occasion on which decisive action by President Chehab might have solved the crisis," writes the UK ambassador:

If he had immediately and publicly accepted M. Karame's resignation as soon as it was offered, and personally announced the formation of his military "Government of Public Safety", it would almost certainly have met with little or no opposition. His twenty-four hours hesitation gave time for the supporters of the Karame government to regroup themselves.⁶³⁹

As the president slowly proceeded, decisive action came from an unexpected quarter: The Council of Trade Unions announced that it would call a general strike from 15 October if the crisis had not been resolved, a move that threatened to paralyse what remained of the country's public services and commerce.⁶⁴⁰ Under this immense pressure, the key players gathered at Chehab's home in Jounieh on the night of 14-15 October. Chehab later told Ambassador Crosthwaite that an agreement was only reached "after he had threatened in the event of failure to broadcast an account of the difficulties they had put in his way".⁶⁴¹

Early in the morning, Chehab and Karami emerged to announce a new government with just four ministers, two Sunni and two Maronite: Rachid Karami, Hussein Oueini, Raymond Edde, and Pierre Gemayel. If the resolution was good enough for the five of them, it was good enough for most of the country; and just like that, the counterrevolution was effectively over. Its effects transformed the capital in a matter of hours. The Christian-led strike was lifted, and by noon on the day of the announcement, the Beirut souks were once again open for business and "cinemas and cabarets prepared to reopen, after five

⁶³⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 5

⁶³⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, pp. 5-6

⁶⁴⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 15 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/650

⁶⁴¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 7

months.”⁶⁴² Shortly thereafter, the new government received a unanimous vote of confidence from the Chamber.⁶⁴³

The fragile detente

In early November, as the détente finally seemed to take hold, the four-man ‘no victor, no vanquished’ cabinet requested and was granted special powers by the parliament.⁶⁴⁴ For six months, the government would have extraordinary powers to unilaterally pass legislative decrees, as part of Chehab’s broader vision for administrative overhaul, as well as matters of finance and security. These special powers would be essential in allowing Chehab to bypass a stacked parliament and implement reform.

Yet even before his government was in place, Chehab moved forward with “reorganising the internal forces and the office of public security and imposing the tight control of the army over these institutions”.⁶⁴⁵ Later, the government would use its special powers to inscribe the reorganisation, as well as modernisation of training and equipment, into law.⁶⁴⁶

Friction between army and internal forces had been a significant issue during the ‘58 war. After Chehab and Chamoun’s impasse on the use of military force in 1954, Chamoun had worked to make his internal security forces independent of army. This meant that, in 1958, he was able to deploy them against rebels when Chehab refused to send in the army.⁶⁴⁷ Upon assuming the presidency, Chehab immediately set out to correct this state of affairs and unify the country’s coercive instruments.

In early October, PM-designate Karami announced new appointments to three key security posts: The Chief of Police (Commandant Aziz Ahdab), Commander-in-Chief of the Gendarmerie (Col. Joseph Simaan), and the Director of General Security (Capt. Toufiq Jalbout). All three new appointees were “military men”, and their training and

⁶⁴² Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 7

⁶⁴³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 17 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/651

⁶⁴⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/658, -/667

⁶⁴⁵ Kabbara (1988), pp. 160-161

⁶⁴⁶ ‘La reform des forces de sécurité’, *Le Commerce du Levant*, Oct 1961, in CADN 91PO/B/105

⁶⁴⁷ Kabbara (1988), pp. 160-161

appointments would thereafter be subject to the army.⁶⁴⁸ Although the UK Embassy at the time reported that these specific appointments did not appear to be political, the decision to transfer power away from civilian control was manifestly a political act.⁶⁴⁹ Ultimately, in late May 1959, the government would form “a special administrative branch in the Ministry of Interior” tasked with supervising the internal security forces. The branch would have tremendous power, and it would be dominated by army officers.⁶⁵⁰

Meanwhile, as US and UNOGIL forces withdrew from Lebanese territory and the US announced a change towards accommodation in its policy towards Nasser,⁶⁵¹ Chehab began to pursue his circumscribed policy interests in earnest. From the start of 1959, it was evident that Chehab’s immediate objectives were administrative reform and repairing Lebanon’s relations with the UAR. He quickly abandoned the Eisenhower Doctrine, and announced that henceforth, Lebanon would follow a foreign policy of ‘positive neutrality’.⁶⁵² While Karami asserted Lebanon’s regional nonalignment between Cairo and Baghdad, in practice, he and Chehab found it more expedient to lean towards Egypt. Formal economic talks between Lebanon and the UAR got underway. Then, in February, the domestic climate threatened to incinerate their progress.

First, a string of inauspicious events took place: though none was explicitly sectarian, they all took on a sectarian colour. Three monks were attacked by Jaafari tribesmen in Akkar, an interfaith parking dispute in Tripoli escalated into manslaughter, and notable figures were murdered in Tripoli and Saida.⁶⁵³ The Parliament was furious over the surge in violence, and blamed the government for failing to protect the citizens it served; deputies called upon the government to either “govern or leave”.⁶⁵⁴ In response to the outcry, Minister Edde put forward a law which strengthened penalties in cases of premeditated murder which was swiftly passed by the chamber.⁶⁵⁵ In several regions, including Beirut,

⁶⁴⁸ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Dept, 3 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/645

⁶⁴⁹ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Dept, 3 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/645

⁶⁵⁰ Kabbara (1988), pp. 160-161

⁶⁵¹ Gates (1999), p. 224

⁶⁵² Kalawoun (2000), pp. 63-68

⁶⁵³ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Feb 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 191, pp. 3-4

⁶⁵⁴ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Feb 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 191, pp. 4-5

⁶⁵⁵ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 20 Feb 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 269

the army had to be deployed to maintain order, but for most February they were able to perform this task.⁶⁵⁶

In February 1959, the government also announced a three-stage plan for the gradual disarmament of the population: First, every village and urban district would be asked to turn over a certain quantity of arms (According to Edde, the government had very detailed intelligence on what weapons were held by members of the public, although the French ambassador deemed this claim ‘dubious’).⁶⁵⁷ After an agreed deadline, those which failed to do so would be fined double the value of the missing weapons. If any villages or districts still failed to obey the order, the government would have recourse “to all other means of disarming the population”.⁶⁵⁸

Nonetheless, things came to a head later in the month with the first anniversary of Syria and Egypt’s union as the United Arab Republic. To mark the event, Nasser had travelled to Syria for celebrations.⁶⁵⁹ Spirits and tensions in Lebanon were high, and fed a slow rise of Muslim-Christian clashes over Nasser. Finally, the skirmishes escalated a point where the army had to be deployed to contain them.

The first major incident took place after Lebanese Nasserists vandalised a Basta-to-Gemmayze tramcar with celebratory pro-Nasser graffiti. When it returned later in the day from the predominantly Christian Gemmayze, the Nasserists were outraged to find their graffiti (arguably predictably) defaced and replaced with pro-Chamoun slogans. They set the offending tram alight at Riad al-Solh square in central Beirut, wrecked several other tramcars, and blocked the Beirut fire brigade from extinguishing the blaze. In the meantime, rumours of exaggerated slights spread among fighters from both sides of the previous summer’s conflict. Ex-Loyalist and ex-Opposition partisans descended en masse upon the city centre, where they brawled with “stones and knives” until the army finally intervened.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁶ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 20 Feb 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 269, p. 5

⁶⁵⁷ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 20 Feb 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 269, p. 4

⁶⁵⁸ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 20 Feb 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 269, p. 3

⁶⁵⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 28 Feb 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/5; 371/151139

⁶⁶⁰ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Mar 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 365, pp. 2-4

To great public contempt, the government attempted to play down the incident as an adolescent row blown out of proportion.⁶⁶¹ However, they were unable to maintain their denials when a still-more serious incident took place the following week.

At the cinema one evening, Muslims audience members were horrified when Christians burst into applause at Charles de Gaulle's appearance on the newsreel. They had their chance a few moments later, applauding Nasser to Christian ire. A verbal dispute escalated when a man attacked the person sitting in front of him with a chisel – a 'weapon' obviously not included in the government's disarmament campaign.⁶⁶² The following day, the cinema's inadequate solution was to delete the newsreel footage of de Gaulle, but not Nasser, and a more violent scene erupted:

Trouble started in a cinema after the appearance of Nasser in a newsreel was applauded by some of the audience and jeered at by others. The fighting spread to the pavement outside and within half an hour armed toughs from both Christian and Moslem quarters were out in strength. The army was again called and order was soon restored, but not before two demonstrators had been killed, nine wounded, and three more tramcars destroyed.⁶⁶³

Most disturbing, of course, was how easily these flare-ups were provoked; they emphasised the precariousness of the relative peace which had ensued since the government of four came into power. This is not to say, however, that progress had not been made: by February 1959, communal leaders seemed more able to control and talk down their followers.⁶⁶⁴ Yet their authority had its limits, and the tensions did not subside. Several days later after the incident at the cinema, three Christians were kidnapped, seemingly at random, and brutally murdered. In response, Interior Minister Edde called out the incompetence of the security forces as well as his own ministry's officials; the other Christian minister, Gemayel, attempted to resign, and was only persuaded to stay on by Chehab's assurance that the perpetrators of this latest crime would be "brought to justice within 48 hours".⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶¹ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Mar 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 365, pp. 3

⁶⁶² Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Mar 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 365, pp. 4-5

⁶⁶³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 28 Feb 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/5(A)

⁶⁶⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 28 Feb 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/5(A)

⁶⁶⁵ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 7 Mar 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/6

Gemayel's 'ultimatum' seems to have shocked the government into action: by the following morning, 35 arrest warrants had been issued in the kidnapping case and parts of Basta were encircled by security forces. These measures were largely achievable due to the cooperation of the Muslim and Nasserist leadership.⁶⁶⁶ The actual kidnapper, Ibrahim Nabulsi, was turned over to the government by his own Popular Resistance Committee, promptly sentenced to death, and hung just six weeks after his crime took place.⁶⁶⁷ For his part, Nabulsi had insisted that he was working on the instructions of the Popular Resistance Committee leadership – an allegation the government showed little interest in pursuing.⁶⁶⁸ After Nabulsi's trial and sentencing, his wife was also put in prison, "ostensibly for making a demonstration; it is thought that she has threatened to expose the instigators of the murder".⁶⁶⁹ Raymond Edde came in for much criticism and reproach as interior minister after the events of late February. However, he defended his choice to not use more repressive measures.⁶⁷⁰

By mid-March, word was buzzing that Presidents Chehab and Nasser would soon hold a long-awaited summit. While the Lebanese Arab nationalists hoped that they would use the opportunity to develop regional policy, especially in respect to Israel and Iraq, Christians and moderates mostly wanted the talks limited to bilateral economic issues.⁶⁷¹

Chehab and the Karami government were dedicated to reaching some kind of economic accord with the UAR. This was not chiefly as a means to consolidate good relations, but rather because Lebanon's economy was so dependent on Syria and, to a lesser degree, Egypt. In particular, Lebanese traders needed to pass through Syria to gain access to the broader Arab transit trade market. Since half of the government – Karami and Oueini – supported Nasser, in 1959, the Lebanese aim was to stay neutral enough in the Nasser's

⁶⁶⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 7 Mar 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/6

⁶⁶⁷ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 7 Mar 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/6

⁶⁶⁸ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 17 Apr 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 576, pp. 1-2

⁶⁶⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office 1959 FO 371/142210/1015/7

⁶⁷⁰ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Mar 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 365, p. 6

⁶⁷¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 20 Mar 1959, 26 Mar 1959, FO 371/142217/10316/1

feud with Qassem in Iraq to not alienate the latter, but not so neutral as to alienate the former.⁶⁷²

The two presidents finally met on 25 March 1959, in a tent planted in the no-man's-land between Lebanon and Syria. To the great relief of many observers, Nasser did not seem to press the Lebanese president on the issue of his dispute with Qassem. They issued a joint communiqué which emphasised the following "principles": keenness on strengthening and expanding cooperation "in everything that would consolidate their independence, sovereignty and entity" within the Arab League and UN Charters; strengthening solidarity on 'Arab causes'; and a desire to resolve their outstanding economic issues. This final principle, moreover, noted that Chehab and Nasser had already told their respective governments to move forward "without delay", "in the same spirit of cordiality and understanding which prevailed during the meeting of the two Presidents".⁶⁷³ This latter instruction was taken by the UK ambassador as a "mildly encouraging" signal; he also noted that the Lebanese press seemed to appreciate the de facto recognition of their country's sovereignty.⁶⁷⁴

While the government had some success in its foreign and economic policy, when it came to the subject of disarming the population, the government was ill equipped to do so even with its special powers.⁶⁷⁵ Although security improved, a catalogue of crimes during 1959 "[show] that the administration of justice in this country neither commands nor deserves much respect".⁶⁷⁶

Throughout the spring and summer, Raymond Edde in his capacity as interior minister showed considerable strength in the face of disobedience, and did much to return a sense of law and order to daily life.⁶⁷⁷ While Edde did not dare to take on the more powerful disturbers of the peace, he did successfully used military force to put a stop to civil unrest

⁶⁷² Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 22 Jan 1960, FO 371/151139/1011/1

⁶⁷³ Text of Nasser-Chehab Joint Communiqué, 26 Mar 1959, FO 371/142217/10316/2

⁶⁷⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 26 Mar 1959, FO 371/142217/10316/2

⁶⁷⁵ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, Mar 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/8, p. 2

⁶⁷⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 22 Jan 1960, FO 371/151139/1011/1

⁶⁷⁷ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 18 Jul 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/15, pp. 3-4

and other disturbances.⁶⁷⁸ Crosthwaite conceded, “Whatever the moral drawbacks of a policy of being weak with the strong and strong with the weak, there is no doubt that there has on the surface been a great improvement in security and stability in the country as a whole”.⁶⁷⁹

Nonetheless, lawlessness appeared to be on the rise again from early June. There were several high-profile-adjacent murders, including the headman of Aarsal and Rene Mouawad’s driver. Additionally,

There have also been several acts of wilful terrorism, such as the placing of small bombs outside two Beirut cinemas and the throwing of others indiscriminately from moving cars at night. ... The most extraordinary case of all occurred ... when an argument between two drivers on the main Damascus Road caused each to draw his gun and fire wildly (though ineffectually) at the other.⁶⁸⁰

While few of the attacks seemed politically-motivated, they put the population on edge – especially after the murder of MP Naim Moughabghab in late July. Moughabghab, a close ally of Chamoun, was killed en route to the presidential summer palace in Beiteddine by supporters of Kamal Jumblatt. Records suggest that the killing was likely not premeditated, but rather the result of a traffic dispute that escalated into violence (in support of this theory, Saunders notes that Moughabghab was “a tough whose megalomania probably caused the incident”).⁶⁸¹ Nonetheless, many people immediately read it as a political killing.

Despite a swift government response, the Moughabghab incident put the government’s credibility on the line. This high-profile ‘assassination’ amidst an atmosphere of general lawlessness was taken by many Christians “as proof that the Government is incapable of maintaining law and order in the country -- a view which is corroborated they think by the obvious inability or reluctance on the part of the authorities to bring Kemal Jumblatt to heel”.⁶⁸² The Moughabghab family brought a case against Jumblatt personally for

⁶⁷⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 27 Apr 1959 FO 371/142210/1015/8, pp. 3-4

⁶⁷⁹ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 18 Jul 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/15, p. 4

⁶⁸⁰ Edden to Foreign Office, 8 Aug 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/20, p. 1

⁶⁸¹ Saunders (covering note), 28 Jul 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/16

⁶⁸² Edden to Foreign Office, 8 Aug 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/20, p. 2

“incitement to murder”.⁶⁸³ Jumblatt attended the hearing and rejected the charges; he also brought a suit of his own against several right-wing papers for similar accusations.⁶⁸⁴ Kesrouan Labaki, a journalist at *Le Soir* who had written that Jumblatt was “morally responsible” for the murder, was himself the victim of a minor attack in early September, which was seen as a ‘warning’ from Jumblatt supporters.⁶⁸⁵ Despite these tensions, however, a largely peaceful by-election was held to fill Moughabghab’s parliamentary seat in September.

Driving reform

The earliest evidence of the Chehabist approach may be found in the reform drive instituted by President Chehab shortly after he came to office. As Bashir writes, the instability of 1958 propelled Chehab’s reforms: “Because of these strong prevailing conditions, it was then thought by the new regime that an honest, strong, and efficient administrative system organised on a sound scientific basis would act as an effective unifying factor in restoring order to a chaotic situation”.⁶⁸⁶ The first period of Chehab’s presidency, with its theme of ‘laying the groundwork’, focused on implementing measures that would pave the way for later social and economic developments.

Lebanon’s administrative structure in the Chehabist era included three kinds of institutions: ministries and public agencies; administrative territorial units; and independent agencies and public utilities.⁶⁸⁷ All were wracked by endemic problems, which, according to Bashir, could only be resolved through “social and political maturity”: “Administrative action in itself is no more than a reflection of what the role of the state in society looks like. If in the first place that role is misconceived, then improvements in the administrative machinery may not yield significant results”.⁶⁸⁸ Bashir cited several major administrative problems in Lebanon, including the public’s lack of trust in government; an “obsolete concept of

⁶⁸³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 26 Aug 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/22

⁶⁸⁴ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 5 Sep 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/25

⁶⁸⁵ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 4 Sep 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 1237, p. 2

⁶⁸⁶ Bashir (1965), p. 62

⁶⁸⁷ Bashir (1965), p. 35

⁶⁸⁸ Bashir (1965), pp. 44-45

public office” which cast office as a concession; an “undemocratic concept of authority” among public servants; and an overly legalistic concept of administration.⁶⁸⁹

Three further areas merit a brief discussion. First, the over-centralisation of Lebanon’s bureaucracy made its work highly inefficient. The system offered little leeway for local or even regional authorities to make independent decisions. Aside from the logistical constraints, this also bogged down the administrative leadership: “Centralisation limits the delegation of authority and assures that the man at the top will have to do much of the paperwork, while he is left with little time to do the kind of thinking, planning, and administering which his post requires”.⁶⁹⁰

Another arguably more critical problem was the lack of qualified personnel within the administration. Because public office was so often viewed by its holders as a source of patronage, many unqualified employees were hired as political favours. In some cases, these people did not even show up for work, simply collecting a paycheck every month.⁶⁹¹ A similar issue was presented by legally mandated sectarian quotas, which led to many strong candidates being rejected in favour of weaker ones. Ultimately, the Lebanese administration was understaffed by employees lacking the right qualifications, including the near-absence of administrative specialists.⁶⁹²

A third major issue cited by Bashir was the tendency to copy formal institutions and practices from the West “without due regard to their applicability” in the Lebanese context. Bashir writes of the contemporary practices in the 1960s, “There is a fallacious belief prevailing in the Lebanese government that new modern institutions and techniques, since they are working properly in the Western societies, should give similar results if they are transferred to other societies”.⁶⁹³

Whereas Chehab’s initial administrative reforms were largely drawn up by local experts and consultants, when it came to socio-economic development Chehab was keen to import

⁶⁸⁹ Bashir (1965), pp. 44-48

⁶⁹⁰ Bashir (1965), p. 47

⁶⁹¹ Bashir (1965), p. 50

⁶⁹² Bashir (1965), p. 51

⁶⁹³ Bashir (1965), p. 48

expertise from abroad.⁶⁹⁴ According to the IRFED philosophy, less-developed countries needed to learn from the example of the more advanced countries: foreign experts should consult on institution-building, while ensuring that local experts were trained to subsequently assume control.⁶⁹⁵ Particularly in light of the aforementioned personnel shortcomings, Chehab brought over foreign, mainly French experts to advise him on a variety of matters related to development. Not only did he recruit consultants from the top of their field, he also found people who were equally committed to social justice – such as Michel Ecochard, the urban planner who developed a Chehabist plan for Beirut.⁶⁹⁶

The UK ambassador notes that initial scepticism over the potential of Chehab's 'committees' to get much done gave way as people watched them get to work drafting legislation and advice.⁶⁹⁷ In the new year, the administrative reform committees set about preparing and drafting a large number of administrative decree-laws for the government. Bashir describes four levels of communication at work:

The task forces were mainly responsible for gathering data and conducting the necessary research. The Central Committee and the Preparatory Committees were mainly responsible for studying the findings and the recommendations of the task forces and then submitting their opinions in projects of legislative decrees to the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers was mainly responsible for studying and adopting the projects of legislative decrees.⁶⁹⁸

By April, however, the opacity of the process was a source of public concern, and various rumblings obliged the government to break its "long silence" on administrative reform in a weekly press conference. PM Karami tried to reassure sceptics that everything was moving along according to plan, "and affirmed that the government would keep its promises before the expiration of its extraordinary powers".⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁴ Verdeil (2009), pp. 86-87

⁶⁹⁵ 'Propositions d'actions generales pour l'elaboration du plan – Introduction aux schemas', Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, Mission IRFED-Liban, Nov 1962, p. 12

⁶⁹⁶ Verdeil (2009), p. 133

⁶⁹⁷ Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, 8 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/3

⁶⁹⁸ Bashir (1965), p. 69

⁶⁹⁹ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 17 Apr 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 576, p. 4

And indeed, the ‘government of four’ issued 162 decree-laws on the final day before its special powers expired in June. These decrees were “basic laws about the administration from the point of view of definition of objectives, scopes, functions, major units, channels of communication, accountability, and responsibility”.⁷⁰⁰ Sixty-two of the decrees, “each one long and detailed”, pertained specifically to the organisation of ministries and government agencies. “Ministries were reorganised, new offices were set up, the rights of civil servants were defined; in fact a blue print for the administration of the whole country was laid down”.⁷⁰¹

The administrative measures taken during the first period of Chehab’s presidency may be summarised as “the reorganisation of the present administrative machine, the redefinition of the status and necessary qualifications of a civil servant, the creation of certain new bodies with an advisory and inspectoral capacity, and personnel changes.”⁷⁰² Two new institutions were particularly important. Firstly, the Civil Service Commission, which had two major areas of responsibility: the “administration of personnel laws regarding matters of recruitment, selection, promotion and transfer” and improving “the standard and the equality of public personnel by holding pre- and post-entry training programs in public administration”.⁷⁰³ The second key institution was the Central Inspection Commission, which was responsible for the inspection of all public agencies except the Internal Security Forces and the Ministries of Justice and Defence; and promoting interdepartmental coordination, and commissioning public tenders and administrative studies.⁷⁰⁴

The primary aim of the new legislation was apparently “to re-organise the administrative services in such a way as to make them more independent of politics”.⁷⁰⁵ While ever cynical, the UK adopted a more positive outlook:

It remains to be seen, as these reforms are put into effect, how far they will go to remove corruption, nepotism and pluralism in the administrative machine. But this is

⁷⁰⁰ Bashir (1965), p. 62

⁷⁰¹ Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, 8 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/3

⁷⁰² Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, 8 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/3, p. 2

⁷⁰³ Bashir (1965), p. 75

⁷⁰⁴ Bashir (1965), pp. 74-76

⁷⁰⁵ 1959 FO 371/142210/1015/9, p. 6

the goal, and the government deserves credit for making it so, instead of contenting itself with replacing the supporters of the former regime with its own friends. It has been strongly encouraged in this by President Chehab, who is honest himself and has honest men round him.⁷⁰⁶

While the summer decree-laws did not directly address personnel issues, they set those reforms in motion: civil servants were given a month during which they could retire with their pensions, to be followed by a two-month period when the government could dismiss at will. The government also granted itself the right to transfer civil servants for six months.⁷⁰⁷ However, events conspired to mostly nullify the dismissal option, as Karami was abroad and Oueini seriously ill for much of the period. “It was out of the question for the two remaining Ministers (both Christian) to take drastic action”, especially as their mutual acrimony grew.⁷⁰⁸

After the expiry of its special powers in mid-June, the government had neither resigned nor expanded its number. At least in part, this was due to Chehab’s concern that expansion could only slow the government’s policy progress, and create fresh grievances as some were included at the expense of others.⁷⁰⁹

Chehab was satisfied with his government of four, supplemented by expert consultants, and he would have preferred to continue his reform drive with the same team indefinitely, “but the reorganisation of Lebanese administrative services has for long been opposed by influential interested parties, and we should not expect the reforms to go through without further intrigues and possible trouble”.⁷¹⁰ Finally, in October, Raymond Edde made good on his longstanding threat to resign; with this move, alongside Oueini’s continuing illness, Chehab had to concede that the government simply could no longer function.⁷¹¹

A new, expanded Karami government was formed, representing a broad enough coalition to finally make the kinds of decisions demanded by the personnel decrees. In late October,

⁷⁰⁶ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 18 Jul 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/15, p. 2

⁷⁰⁷ Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, 8 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/3

⁷⁰⁸ Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, 8 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/3

⁷⁰⁹ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 18 Jul 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/15, p. 5

⁷¹⁰ Edden to Foreign Office, 10 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/30

⁷¹¹ Edden to Foreign Office, 10 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/30, -/29

they announced new appointments to the posts of all five regional governors (*muhafiz*), who would also have greater powers as a part of a broad drive to decentralise Lebanon's administration.⁷¹² Up until that point,

[P]eople living in remote villages were obliged, for the slightest formalities, to present themselves first at the headquarters of their sub-district, then at the seat of the mohafez, and finally, in all probability, in Beirut. Under the new legislation the Mohafez and the Caimacams, (administrators of the sub-districts) will have not only the power to decide themselves the vast majority of administrative questions, but will also have the means to enforce their decisions. The Mohafez, for example, who will be obliged to reside permanently in their districts... will represent all the Ministries except those of Justice and National Defence and will have complete authority over all Government officers in their area.⁷¹³

All five men had good reputations for honesty and conscientiousness.⁷¹⁴ While less administratively significant, the new slate of *qa'imaqams* at sub-district level had profound confessional implications – for the first time, it gave Shia Muslims an even share of posts with Sunnis:

Their increased representation among the Caimacams is perhaps due in some measure to the efforts of M. Ali Bazzi, the new Shia Minister of the Interior, but perhaps also to the intervention of President Chehab, who has on several occasions promised the Shias that their claims will be examined.⁷¹⁵

In the final hours before the last of their special powers expired in December 1959, the government issued “a new flood of decrees” transferring departmental directors-general and other high-ranking civil servants.⁷¹⁶

President Chehab knew he had one more reform to tackle before his mission was complete: Repairing the gerrymandered electoral law. He had refused to even discuss the subject of

⁷¹² Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 6 Nov 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/33

⁷¹³ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 6 Nov 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/33

⁷¹⁴ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 6 Nov 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/33

⁷¹⁵ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 6 Nov 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/33 p. 2

⁷¹⁶ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 19 Dec 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/38

parliamentary elections before the government's special powers expired; and in any case, Edde and Gemayel had rejected any vote before the population was disarmed.⁷¹⁷ For Chehab, the successful, orderly vote in the autumn's by-election – despite the dizzyingly high tensions around the Moughabghab affair in general – had been sufficient evidence that fresh general elections need not wait till disarmament.⁷¹⁸ So as 1959 moved into 1960, he decided to move forward with electoral reform.

The most intense parliamentary debates concerned how the new electoral law would partition Beirut: Should it be divided? If so, along rough Muslim/Christian lines, or by some other rubric?⁷¹⁹ More specifically, should Beirut be divided up in a way that would make it impossible for Sami al-Solh to retain his seat? While the mainstream Sunni leaders, such as Yafi and Salam, were very much in favour of this latter proposition, Minister Pierre Gemayel “obstinately resisted” it. Once again, it fell to Chehab to broker a compromise between the rivals, dividing Beirut in three electoral districts (which were not, incidentally, very favourable to Solh).⁷²⁰ Despite the Beirut debate, “gerrymandering was on the whole avoided” in the law's drafting.⁷²¹

The draft electoral law was presented to the parliament as ‘urgent’, which gave Chehab special powers to implement it by decree if a majority in parliament had neither passed nor vetoed it after 40 days. Chehab was set on May elections, but the ex-Loyalists and others who benefited in 1957 scrambled to find reasons to postpone, and they nearly secured enough votes to do so. However, a compromise was reached by dropping a provision requiring electoral cards.⁷²² The new electoral law finally passed on 21 April, and included three major reforms: voting secrecy was adopted; the chamber increased in size from 66 seats to 99; and constituencies (with the exceptions of Tripoli and Beirut) were drawn on objective administrative boundaries.⁷²³ Another novel factor, of course, was the head of

⁷¹⁷ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 17 Apr 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 576, p. 3

⁷¹⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 20 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/31

⁷¹⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 22 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/4

⁷²⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 18 Feb 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/5

⁷²¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 10 Jan 1961, FO 371/158939/1011/1, p. 1

⁷²² Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 25 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 449, p. 1

⁷²³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 10 Mar 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/6

state's apparent lack of interest in manipulating election results. The French ambassador wrote that,

Even if the electoral law is thus partly stripped of the 'honest' character that the President of the Republic had wanted to give it, an important innovation lies in the fact that, for the first time in the political history of Lebanon, power, which is to say the Chief of State, will refrain from intervening to direct the elections.⁷²⁴

Of course, this did not mean that the election was going to be clean. Boisseson describes the marketplace for votes which would spring up outside polling stations: he reported that prices of a vote ranged, depending on the region and the number of candidates, from LL 5 to LL 30.⁷²⁵ This 'market' had a strong political impact, as some candidates were able to self-fund while others had to seek out wealthier and more powerful patrons. In past elections, including 1957, external parties had been deeply involved in support of both pro-Nasser and pro-Chamoun Lebanese forces. There were several reasons, however, to hope that the 1960 vote might be less vulnerable to international interests.

True to his word, in early May, Chehab dissolved the parliament and formed an eight-man extra-parliamentary caretaker government under Ahmad Daouk to oversee elections. The UK ambassador reports that many Christians appeared "depressed" as the elections neared and they realized that Western powers were not going to intervene on their behalf: "This is, I think, the first time that the pro-Western elements have had to fight an election without some kind of backing, and they are not unnaturally nervous of their ability to stand up to the Arab nationalists, with the help they expect these to be given from Cairo and Damascus".⁷²⁶ Christians lamented to their erstwhile patrons that UAR interference would lead to a strongly pro-Arab parliament, which could present an existential threat if it decided to merge Lebanon with the UAR.⁷²⁷ However, their fears were clearly exaggerated, as the distribution of seats made such an outcome virtually impossible.

⁷²⁴ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 25 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 449, p. 2

⁷²⁵ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 25 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 449, p. 2

⁷²⁶ Crosthwaite to Beith, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/13, p. 2

⁷²⁷ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/14, p. 5

In particular, Christian ire was directed at their recent champions, the United States. They suspected its lack of support this time around was a signal that the Americans had written Lebanon off in favour of accommodating Nasser.⁷²⁸ Both the UK and France report that the Christians had even asked the Vatican for financial assistance, but the papal nuncio refused on grounds of both morality and poverty.⁷²⁹

Ambassador Crosthwaite wrote that he had met with Chehab and told him “in the most categorical terms that we were keeping right out of the whole thing. I think he believes this”.⁷³⁰ France had also determined that it was probably best not to intervene, although the French ambassador confided to Crosthwaite that they always provided “*petits appuis*” to a few faithful friends, and he felt “it would be awkward to refuse them something this time too”. However, as they did not intend to use this support to manipulate election results, the French did not feel it counted as ‘intervention’.⁷³¹

Despite its decision to stay (mostly) above the fray, France did worry about the UAR: they did not know how the UAR planned to assist its clients, but they were certain that Nasser would be spending considerable sums.⁷³² UK intelligence, however, found little indication of Egyptian interference in the run up to the election. The suggestion was that Nasser may not believe that vote-rigging would work in his advantage: He was satisfied with the current regime, and did not want to embarrass Chehab or Karami and the other ex-rebels, and in so doing empower Chamoun.⁷³³

The French military attaché argued against this logic in a report to Defence Intelligence. Even if Nasser was no longer acting hostile toward Lebanon, he argued, and benefitted from their improved relationship, the UAR nonetheless had an even *stronger* interest in boosting Lebanon’s ‘internal contradictions’. Thus, inevitably, the UAR would intervene

⁷²⁸ Crosthwaite to Beith, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/13

⁷²⁹ Crosthwaite to Beith, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/13, p. 3

⁷³⁰ Crosthwaite to Beith, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/13, p. 2

⁷³¹ Crosthwaite to Beith, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/13, p. 2

⁷³² Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 25 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 449, p. 3

⁷³³ Shattock to Joint Intelligence Committee, 11 May 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/11

in the elections: “The will to interfere in Lebanese affairs is too deeply engrained in the Egyptian and above all the Syrian Special Services for it to not be powerfully apparent”.⁷³⁴

Nonetheless, it seems that the UAR’s interference was largely limited to the formation of lists.⁷³⁵ Much like today, Lebanese voters in the independence era would cast their vote for a slate of candidates rather than individuals. The lists generally included candidates for all seats in the constituency, and while it was possible to write in alternatives, “Past experience has shewn that although cross-voting is allowed, it is not practiced on any great scale”.⁷³⁶

The list system obviously influences electoral alliances, especially for candidates with smaller independent bases of support. As Lijphart noted, it also potentially violates consociational practices, as the list system tends to favour moderate candidates.⁷³⁷ However, while such moderation may influence which names are put further down the list, those at the top will typically represent politicians with strong popular support. Furthermore, while moderates may make the cut, politicians are reluctant to add figures to their lists who are actively unpopular with their own communities.

The nature of the list system likely influenced Camille Chamoun’s last-minute decision to run for a parliamentary seat in the Metn. In the midst of a feud with Pierre Gemayel – and always eager to irritate President Chehab – Chamoun hoped that his list would knock out Gemayel’s, eliminating a rival while positioning himself as the dominant Christian voice in the chamber.⁷³⁸ Almost everyone was worried about electoral violence, especially in mixed constituencies. President Chehab, however, was unwavering in his confidence that the vote would go off smoothly.⁷³⁹

The elections were held over four successive Sundays in June and July 1960. Despite fears, there was no significant violence, perhaps due to “a judicious display of force which discouraged lawlessness”.⁷⁴⁰ With little indication of fraud, the 1960 general elections were

⁷³⁴ Lt-Col de Reals to French Defence Intelligence, 18 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 250, p. 2

⁷³⁵ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/14, p. 5

⁷³⁶ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/14, p. 2

⁷³⁷ Lijphart (1977)

⁷³⁸ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 31 May 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/17

⁷³⁹ Crosthwaite to Lloyd, 12 May 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/14, p. 5

⁷⁴⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, p. 1

assessed as free and fair.⁷⁴¹ External interference was minimal, with “no overt intervention from the United Arab Republic, and such covert action as was taken on behalf of selected candidates seemed to meet with small success.”⁷⁴² Indeed, several notable candidates supported by the UAR lost, including Rashid al-Solh whom Syrians had given their strongest support.⁷⁴³ Just two years on from the 1958 crisis, the vote was an astonishing success.

After the first round of elections for Mount Lebanon on 12 June, it became apparent that the voting secrecy law was encouraging much more cross-voting. This meant that races were closer than ever before, and that figures heading rival lists could both win election. Only two districts in Mount Lebanon saw lists elected in their entirety.⁷⁴⁴ Instead of displacing Gemayel, Chamoun split the vote – he and one other name from his list were elected, but the district’s other three seats went to Kataeb candidates. The election of both Chamoun *and* Gemayel prompted frenzied, last minute shifts of alliance among the Arab nationalists who would be voting the following Sunday in Beirut.⁷⁴⁵

In the capital, the three-way division of constituencies combined with the secret ballot “allowed full play to popular Christian and Moslem sentiment and favoured candidates with a strong sectarian appeal”.⁷⁴⁶ These “extremist trends”, however, were not repeated in the North the following week.⁷⁴⁷ The final vote in the Bekaa also confirmed “the effectiveness of the secret vote in encouraging the expression of personal preferences”.⁷⁴⁸ In the end, names from multiple lists were elected in a majority of constituencies nationwide. The secret ballot also discouraged corruption: for example, in Zahle, “it was reported that this time the price of a vote had fallen from LL 300 to LL 100, and that money

⁷⁴¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, p. 2

⁷⁴² Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 10 Jan 1961, FO 371/158939/1011/1, p. 2

⁷⁴³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, p. 1, 5

⁷⁴⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 14 Jun 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/20

⁷⁴⁵ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25

⁷⁴⁶ Edden to Foreign Office, 21 Jun 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/22

⁷⁴⁷ Edden to Foreign Office, 28 Jun 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/23

⁷⁴⁸ Edden to Foreign Office, 5 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/24

was being paid more as a reward for faithful support than as a stimulus to a change in allegiance”.⁷⁴⁹

Almost all of the major Christian leaders were returned to parliament, including Chamoun; this time, however, most of the Muslims leaders pushed out in ‘57 won seats as well.⁷⁵⁰ Moreover, the scale of election results confirmed that Karami and Saeb Salam were “the two outstanding Sunni Moslem leaders” of the era.⁷⁵¹

It was generally thought that after his success in Beirut M. Salam would be asked to form the new government. He was in a most accommodating mood, and political bargaining of a hectic but unimpassioned kind was in full swing when an event took place which brought out that there is no ground for complacency in the political life of the Lebanon. This was the resignation of President Chehab on the 20th of July.⁷⁵²

Chehab’s surprise resignation

The first phase of Fouad Chehab’s presidency, the first stage of Chehabism, came to an end on the morning of 20 July 1960. Ahead of a scheduled meeting of the acting government, Chehab called Prime Minister Daouk and asked him to come in early so they could discuss “a personal matter”. Daouk, who apparently thought Chehab wanted to talk his government’s tenure, was left “stupefied”.⁷⁵³ Chehab had kept his plan to resign secret from almost everyone. While he had made several remarks about having had enough of politics and wanting to retire, these kinds of expressions were typical of the General, and even his close aides dismissed them as idle comments.⁷⁵⁴ He had also apparently been asking some unusual questions for a president around the office, such as the particulars on how to buy a car.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁴⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, pp. 2-3

⁷⁵⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, p. 4

⁷⁵¹ Edden to Foreign Office, 28 Jun 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/23

⁷⁵² ‘Annual Review for 1960’, 10 Jan 1961, FO 371/158939/1011-1 1960, p. 2-3

⁷⁵³ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 2

⁷⁵⁴ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 13

⁷⁵⁵ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 4-5

As the cabinet members arrived for the meeting in Sarba, they desperately urged Chehab to reconsider. He replied with the same explanation he would employ a few hours later in his public address: He had taken on the presidency out of a sense of obligation, and that obligation had been fulfilled.⁷⁵⁶ Soon, the newly-elected speaker, Sabri Hamade, joined the government in urging the president to stay, but Chehab was unmoved, and at 1pm he addressed the nation:

I only agreed to accede to the presidency because I was convinced to respond to the call of duty and take on an arduous mission in the darkest days and the bitterest circumstances our country had ever known. From the very first day, I set a limit on the remit and duration of my mission. Then I fully devoted myself, with all my heart and all my soul, relying on divine grace and working with faith and sincerity with the Chamber of Deputies and the Governments.

Providence rightly demanded that the hopes of our people not be disappointed; today, the clouds of the crisis have dissipated and the traces of this difficult trial have been erased more rapidly than anyone expected. ... Now that all the conditions necessary for a return to the normal exercise of power have been fulfilled, I believe I have accomplished the mission for which the Nation gave me its confidence and that I completed the task which I took on.⁷⁵⁷

Chehab's broadcast was immediately followed by one from Hamade, describing the morning's events and the government's dismay at the resignation.⁷⁵⁸ Hamade called deputies back to the capital from their summer retreats for an emergency meeting of parliament to draft a petition.⁷⁵⁹ It read as follows:

To His Excellency the General Emir Fouad Chehab:

The news of your resignation is a painful surprise for all the Lebanese people who recognise in you the upright conduct and the spirit of sacrifice necessary to the

⁷⁵⁶ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 3-4

⁷⁵⁷ Chehab, Message of Resignation, Jul 20, 1960

⁷⁵⁸ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 4

⁷⁵⁹ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 4

achievement of national duty. These qualities are clear from your military and political life.

The country as a whole, in these grave circumstances, is unanimous in refusing your departure from a post that you hold with such integrity and sincerity.

In our capacity as national deputies, we call upon your patriotism and ask you reconsider your decision and continue your peaceful mission towards Lebanon's political, economic, and social renaissance, thus allowing the country, still in such delicate circumstances, to avoid a crisis which you do not wish for it.

Please accept this expression of our highest consideration.⁷⁶⁰

Popular demonstrations had begun across the country. At this point, "almost all" of Lebanon's political elite descended upon Sarba, where they joined several thousand citizens already gathered around the president's house. Despite his staff's insistence that Chehab was not home, the crowd refused to disperse; finally, a reluctant President emerged and grudgingly admitted the leadership into his home.⁷⁶¹

The electricity was out in Sarba, so the men argued by candlelight. Sabri Hamade, in a moment of symbolic theatre, seized a candle and burned Chehab's letter of resignation to ash. After hours of futile debate, Chehab finally caved: he withdrew his resignation, albeit supposedly only after his wife urged him to do so. Later, Chehab would say he regretted having not immediately left the country, as then they would have been unable to "catch" him.⁷⁶²

The French ambassador was struck by the intensity of the Lebanese reaction to Chehab's resignation, and the panic and disarray it sparked across the country:

This reaction cannot be explained simply by the fear of a new [1958-style] crisis... On all sides, the impression seems to have been that, under present circumstances, General

⁷⁶⁰ Communiqué, 20 Jul 1960, reprinted in CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 4

⁷⁶¹ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 4-5

⁷⁶² Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 4-5

Chehab was irreplaceable at the head of the Lebanese state, because only he was capable of maintaining intercommunal equilibrium and the cohesion of the country.⁷⁶³

Chehab told Boisseson that he suspected that, once the initial shock had worn off, plenty of presidential hopefuls would have emerged.⁷⁶⁴ Chehab and Boisseson both indicate that the most likely successor was former president Bechara al-Khoury, a view apparently shared by the public: even as the crowd marched towards Chehab's house in Sarba, a smaller grouping had assembled around Khoury's home in Kaslik.⁷⁶⁵

After the whirlwind of resignation and withdrawal, observers searched for explanations. In the mind of Ambassador Crosthwaite, it was actually rather simple: Chehab "found his political role increasingly repugnant and decided that the interval between the first meeting of the new Chamber and the appointment of a new Government offered the most suitable opportunity to get out, but that he had underestimated the pressure that would be brought on him to return".⁷⁶⁶

Yet the choice of interval is not necessarily as intuitive as Crosthwaite implies: Chehab would be leaving the country with neither a president nor a government. According to Intendant Jean Lay, one of Chehab's closest confidantes, the timing was down to a desire to appear impartial and allow his successor to build his own government.⁷⁶⁷ The French embassy similarly judged Chehab's resignation address as the "authentic expression of its author's feelings".⁷⁶⁸ However, they noted the possibility that his resignation may have been moved up by the unpalatable prospect for Chehab, as a man of the army, of appointing Saeb Salam the new prime minister.

Yet not everyone was convinced by the official story. Boisseson reports various theories circulating at the time, which all saw the army involved in one or another insidious fashion: Chehab's resignation was a ruse so he could return more forcefully, bringing the military into politics; conversely, that it was the only way for the general to escape distasteful

⁷⁶³ Boisseson to French Foreign Minister, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 6

⁷⁶⁴ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 8-9

⁷⁶⁵ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 11-12

⁷⁶⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 21 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/27

⁷⁶⁷ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 15-16

⁷⁶⁸ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 12

collusion with the Deuxième Bureau; or that it was the pressure of the army, rather than politicians, the public, or his wife, that convinced Chehab to withdraw his resignation.⁷⁶⁹ Kabbara describes the situation in such terms, writing that Chehab resigned in protest at the army's intervention in politics: "The President began to realise the danger, to both the army and the country, in the continuation of such a state of affairs".⁷⁷⁰

In any case, regardless of Chehab's intentions, the effect of his resignation and its subsequent withdrawal unequivocally strengthened his authority. Lebanon now knew that its stability was at the mercy of an apparently irreplaceable president.⁷⁷¹ Yet Chehab did not take immediately take advantage of his new-found power: He respected the outcome of the election, and grudgingly appointed Saeb Salam as his premier.

Georges Naccache, as one of the men at the centre of the fray in Sarba, had only this to say:

[Chehab] knows that history, alas, does not move forward without impurities. But what he refuses, is to make impurity a condition of history. The 20 July affair, it was essentially that: the projection of his internal drama, the revolt, from the depths of his being, of the honest man against the statesman.

How he overcame this – by what new tearing away from himself he returned to his post – all the Lebanese were, that evening, the witnesses. He was helped by a personal philosophy and, I believe, simply by a religious sense of duty that ordered him to carry out – even without hope – his task until the end.⁷⁷²

From July 1960 onwards, Chehab recalibrated his presidential 'task' in line with longer-term goals. In his remaining four years, he would pursue a comprehensive reform program, national cooperation and reconciliation, economic diversification, and social justice. It was in this second period that 'Chehabism' would truly come to fruition as a political approach.

⁷⁶⁹ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 14-15

⁷⁷⁰ Kabbara (1988), p. 162

⁷⁷¹ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, p. 17

⁷⁷² Naccache (1960), p. 25

Outcomes

The first period of Fouad Chehab's presidency is characterised in part by its grudging accommodation of consociational principles alongside Chehabist imperatives. As Chehab came into office, Lebanon was still in the throes of crisis, and in those moments of emergency the consociational outcomes of stability and democracy were more urgent than the Chehabist outcomes of national unity, modernisation, and social justice.

Chehab and his government were reasonably successful at meeting their circumscribed ambitions for the transition away from crisis. Disarmament, though excluded from Chehab's account of his 'mission', was one key area where little progress was made. It is difficult not to wonder whether, had a more robust effort been made towards disarmament, the late 1960s might have taken a different path in Lebanon.

Consociationalism and Chehabism

The counter-revolution came out of consociational disarray. Chehab and Karami's first government violated Lebanon's consociational agreement. Although it technically included Christian members, they were not representative of the community at large. In a competitive democracy, this might have forced the loyalists into opposition. In consociational Lebanon, a minority – albeit a large one – was able to hold the entire country hostage for three weeks. Chehab resisted at first, but he eventually accepted that in that moment, Lebanon's equilibrium could only be restored by giving in to consociational pressure.

Karami's first ministerial statement in October 1958 essentially committed to upholding the precepts laid out in Chehab's inaugural address. Yet the UK ambassador notes that both of the Christian ministers, Gemayel and Edde, expressed concerns to him over the terms of the settlement shortly after their appointment. In large part, their apprehension was lodged in the fact that both of their Muslim counterparts, Karami and Oueini, had "repeatedly asserted their belief in the future of the Lebanon as an Arab state".⁷⁷³

In the fifteen years since Lebanon's National Pact was agreed, it had failed to adapt to internal and external developments. The counterrevolution also may have reflected

⁷⁷³ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/655, p. 8

Christian fears that their control over “the national life” was being broken by Muslim segments: “The result has been a desperate effort to preserve as much of the Christian position in the State as possible, in the knowledge that if the Christians do not put forth their maximum effort before the new framework hardens they may never again be able to alter it to their advantage”.⁷⁷⁴

As the crisis came to an end, Gemayel stated that true national reconciliation could only take place on the basis of a ‘real’ equilibrium which reflected the country’s segments and sentiments. Otherwise, he warned, the a still more dangerous iteration of the crisis would simply ignite in a matter of days or weeks.⁷⁷⁵

Government formation in Lebanon always offers a view of the consociational process at work. For example, another interesting point emerges in 1959 from the debates over when and whether to expand the government of four. Aside from the logistical burdens placed on the ministers, it only included Maronites and Sunnis, and thus excluded all the other sects. This “exceptional and emergency arrangement” was seen as a stabilising influence during moments of crisis, but no longer appropriate as normal life returned to the country in 1959.⁷⁷⁶

Tensions in the four-man government, moreover, escalated by the month: By late summer 1959, with Oueini ill and abroad, and Karami off to the Arab Summit in Casablanca, the dispute between Ministers Edde and Gemayel as to who should serve as acting PM reached such a height that Chehab, ever the nation’s parent, declared there would be no interim premier at all.⁷⁷⁷ A government of four, reduced to an effective government of two, both Maronites, was proving problematic: “This incident reveals... the fragility of the governing team’s cohesion, and once more draws attention to the unusually narrow dimensions of the cabinet”.⁷⁷⁸ When a new, eight-man line up was announced in October, it was “less starkly

⁷⁷⁴ Scott to Lloyd, 1 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/647, p. 1-2

⁷⁷⁵ Gemayel, quoted by Roche, 10 Oct 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1245, pp. 3-4

⁷⁷⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 30 May 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/9

⁷⁷⁷ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 4 Sep 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 1237, p. 3

⁷⁷⁸ Des Garets to French Foreign Minister, 4 Sep 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 1237, pp. 3-4

characteristic of the country's basic polarity and more representative of the overlying complexities.”⁷⁷⁹

Another instructive example of consociational bargaining occurred in July 1959, when former prime minister and Chamoun loyalist Sami al-Solh returned to Lebanon from self-imposed exile. In addition to the expected chatter and controversy, the Sunni-led, ex-opposition Popular Resistance Front declared “they did not wish to disturb law and order during the tourist season but they could not remain silent in face of a man who could have avoided the incidents of last year; they would pursue him whatever the sacrifice”. As rumours circulated that the PRF's leader, Rashid Chehabeddine, would be subject to judicial review for the statement, other Sunni leaders including Saeb Salam and Karami quickly declared their support for Chehabeddine and his refusal to stand in court. For all its apparent power, the mainstream Sunni elite was accountable to the street, and thus politically unable to take a stand when a notorious criminal threatened the life of a former premier.

Despite outrage among the former loyalists, including several ministers, the government declined to pursue any charges against Chehabeddine, a decision they justified on the basis that the PRF was unlikely to act upon its threat, and “efforts are being made by moderate elements to damp the whole thing down, both by checking hostile criticism in the press and by discouraging M. Solh's friends from raising the matter in the Chamber”.⁷⁸⁰ The Sunni community was not strong enough on its own to get away with actually killing or exiling Solh, so a compromise was struck.

Thus, Solh's return also signalled further progress in Lebanon's recovery despite the tensions it provoked. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Edde's failure to pursue charges or indeed further investigation of Chehabeddine in the Nabulsi kidnap-and-murder affair earlier in the year.

Yet it was precisely this kind of bargaining that Chehab sought to root out. The drive for reform initiated by Chehab almost immediately upon taking office is our earliest hard

⁷⁷⁹ Edden to Foreign Office, 10 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/30, p. 2

⁷⁸⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 10 Jul 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/13

evidence of the Chehabist approach at work. It was propelled by Chehab's own vision for Lebanon, but also his distaste for the existing system:

The spoils system is tradition in this country, and when President Chamoun laid down office it was inevitable that there would be many changes in the Civil Service. As a soldier, however, the new President had suffered from the inefficiency of the governmental machine and had developed a pronounced distaste for politicians. Helped, no doubt, by the balance of power within Monsieur Kerame's four-man government, he was therefore anxious that the changes should amount to more than replacing as many as possible of the "ins" by the "outs".⁷⁸¹

Many of even these preliminary reforms, however, came up against resistance from the system. For example, when the government issued decrees transferring high ranking civil service personnel in December 1959, the changes went over rather poorly in parliament. Some of Lebanon's elite were upset that it did not go far enough, while others were bitter because their kin or clients had been excluded. Once again, Lebanon's elite were obliged to bargain: the government conceded and grant a post to Speaker Sabri Hamade's nephew, in order win their vote of confidence from the parliament. Saunders, in a covering note, writes: "This is a splendid example of the Lebanese 'flair for compromise', particularly if we bear in mind that the Speaker (Sabri Hamade) who was only recently elected, is one of the principal elements the reforms have wanted to remove!"⁷⁸²

Chehab did what he could to complicate and challenge these consociational compromises. But he ultimately conceded, time and again, because it was more important – for the moment – to keep the country stable. In his resignation address, President Chehab called upon all Lebanese at home and abroad "to close their ranks, unify their spirits and abide in all circumstances by the National Pact, which is the tacit charter of their state, and to respect it and strictly apply it".⁷⁸³ Yet as Ambassador Crosthwaite observes, the resignation itself laid bare some of the Pact's underlying weaknesses.

⁷⁸¹ Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, 8 Jan 1960, FO 371/151140/1015/3

⁷⁸² Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Department, 31 Dec 1959, FO 371/151140/1015/2

⁷⁸³ Chehab, Message of Resignation, Jul 20, 1960

The sectarian allocation of posts within Lebanon's elite cartel inherently limited the range of qualified candidates. Among the Sunni, choices were limited; the Shia had no strong leader at all. The Druze and the smaller Christian communities had to accept their exclusion from key roles.

The Maronites, Ambassador Crosthwaite judged, had produced three good, qualified presidents since independence, and their Patriarch and leading clergy were of "outstanding ability". Yet, he warned, "the supply of presidential timber from one quarter of this small country is not inexhaustible, and there is no satisfactory successor to General Chehab in sight". Crosthwaite, in the same dispatch, expressed concern that Chehab might try to resign again before his mandate expired.⁷⁸⁴

When Chehab resigned in July 1960, he expected it to be the end of his presidency. So when he acquiesced to popular demands to stay in office, Chehab had before him a blank slate. He could now build upon his own careful preparations, and he had four years to bring as much of his vision as possible to light. This transition also marked the end of Chehab's reluctant consociational compromising: now that the country was out of danger, he would move ahead with a principled, muscular Chehabist approach.

What Chehab failed to recognise, however, was that the country was built upon these institutions he despised, and they could not be 'reformed' away. In a note written on the UK's Annual Review of Lebanon for 1960, Saunders recognises this from a normative perspective:

The Report might give the impression that the present disorderly way of Lebanese life can and should be put right and that the country could perhaps be better governed by references to appropriate chapter and verse as occasions arise. Any such order and regimentation is contrary to Lebanese character. The whole Lebanese structure depends on a balancing act not only between Christian and Muslim, East and West, Arab and Arab but also on individual issues. To aim at a wholly efficient administrative machine would deprive the Lebanese of the elasticity which now permits them to stimulate quarrels amongst themselves on *soi-disant* points of

⁷⁸⁴ Crosthwaite to FO, Annual Review 1960, 10 Jan 1961, FO 371/158939/1011/1, p. 2-3

principle, but which at the same time permits them to portray themselves as contestants who are tolerant of their rivals' views and beliefs and therefore prepared to reach some compromise.⁷⁸⁵

Chehab, surely, had heard arguments along these lines. But framing Lebanon's consociational system as a reflection of some intrinsic 'national character' implies that, were this 'character' to mature, so might the political system. In 1960, Chehab still believed that Lebanon could become a different kind of democracy through the will of the Lebanese people. This ambition could only fail, however, because it got the causality backwards.

Consociational outcomes

The most significant consociational feature of Lebanon during the first phase of Fouad Chehab's presidency was the strategic installation of coalition government based upon the premise of 'no victor, no vanquished'.

Members of every sect supported both sides in the 1958 conflict. However, the majority of Loyalists and their leaders were Christian, advocating a Maronite Lebanist ideology; whereas the majority of Opposition forces and their leaders were Muslim, and their ideas informed by a predominantly Sunni Pan-Arabism. Other segments in the country were either less invested in the outcome of the dispute, or satisfied to have another group represent their broad interests. For these reasons, while the country lingered in crisis-mode, a coalition made up of two Sunni Opposition leaders and two Maronite Loyalist leaders was an effective stabilising force, as it brought both sides into the same government and gave them each veto power. The 'bare majority' line-up of Karami's first government had not sufficiently represented Loyalist interests, and as such was hugely destabilising. Over time, as the country returned to relative calm, the Christian/Muslim divide gave way to more nuanced differentiation among sects, and the government of four ceased to be sufficiently representative. At this point, representatives of four additional sects were added to the grand coalition.

⁷⁸⁵ Lebanon – Annual Review 1960, 10 Jan 1961, FO 371/158939/1011/1, Covering Note (A. Saunders, 24 Jan 1961)

Throughout the crisis, segmental autonomy was high; if anything, it eclipsed central authority. One mistake made by Fouad Chehab was to see this as a flaw that needed correcting, rather than a stabilising factor. While the precariousness of the *détente* led Chehab to tread lightly, much of his reform program directly threatened the ability of segmental leaders to organise their own affairs.

Political stability

In September and October 1958, political stability in Lebanon was marginal, although election of Chehab as president had offered some restoration of peace. In this context, ‘conflict regulation’ is a useful measure of political stability: as we recall, the conflict-regulation spectrum laid out by Nordlinger essentially gauges violence and regime repression.⁷⁸⁶ This is the dilemma Chehab faced that summer when deciding whether or not to employ the army against the rebels: If he could successfully quash them and end the widespread violence, the crackdown would increase stability. However, if it failed to do so – as it likely would have, given sectarian divisions and the strength of the foreign-supported rebels – it would have deepened the conflict past the point of no return.

Based on the decisions made by Chehab as army commander, Lebanon in the autumn of 1958 was closer to the middle of the ‘conflict regulation’ spectrum than its brutal extreme despite the summer’s civil war.

Another pro-stability factor in deeply-divided societies may be purposive depoliticisation, where the most contentious issues are removed from public debate. We find several notable examples of this in the first phase of Chehab’s presidency. It may be observed in the selection of an apolitical candidate in Chehab himself, as well as in the extraordinary powers requested by his first government to implement reforms. At a time when segmental divisions were particularly salient – and the parliament not necessarily representative – it would have been nearly impossible to advance any significant policy decisions if they had been subject to a broader debate than the one offered within the coalition government. The adoption of a neutral foreign policy is also a move towards depoliticisation, especially given the domestic implications of the Arab political divide.

⁷⁸⁶ Nordlinger (1972), p. 11-12

Consociational theory suggests that heavy external loads will have a deleterious effect on stability. Here, we find the corollary is equally true: the UK Ambassador describes the distraction of the Nasser-Qassem feud as a stabilising influence on Lebanon in 1959.⁷⁸⁷ By the turn of 1960, the government had “come near to tacit acceptance of Egyptian leadership under Nasser of the Arab World”, without significant Christian outcry. This was possible in large part because Nasser had been true to his word on non-interference, and had mostly left Lebanon alone since Chehab came to power.⁷⁸⁸

One of Arendt Lijphart’s complaints about Lebanon’s consociational system, interestingly, is that elections operate in a way that encourages moderate candidates, rather than the communal exemplars who can truly represent their segment’s interests. One consequence of Lebanon’s transition to voting secrecy in 1960 was the ensuing shift from moderate candidates towards extremes. While this move would actually strengthen a consociational democracy, its counter-intuitiveness meant that it was taken broadly as a negative sign. The UK embassy states that the shift was clearly the opposite of what Chehab wanted, and was “bound to make his task more difficult”; they clearly see it as a worrying development themselves. However, in more consociational fashion, the British speculate that maybe the extremes will all balance each other out and better to keep them on the inside.⁷⁸⁹ Similarly, the French suggest that the elections will reflect the present balance of forces – but that it is not necessarily reassuring.⁷⁹⁰

Democracy

The summer’s rebellion and the brief autumn counter-rebellion both help substantiate the claim that majoritarianism may be anti-democratic in deeply-divided societies like Lebanon. These events demonstrate the power of key minority segments to disrupt political and socio-economic life, as well as intransitive nature of core segmental interests. Lebanon under Chamoun made many Muslims feel disenfranchised, as they were powerless to stop major policy decisions which they strongly opposed. The reverse was true in the autumn, with Karami’s first government marginalising Loyalist Christians. Over the course of this

⁷⁸⁷ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 22 Jan 1960, FO 371/151139/1011/1, p. 4

⁷⁸⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 22 Jan 1960, FO 371/151139/1011/1, pp. 2-3

⁷⁸⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, p. 5

⁷⁹⁰ Lt-Col de Reals to French Defence Intelligence, 18 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 250, p. 3

period, from the establishment of the government of four up until Chehab's resignation, there were very few instances of 'majoritarian' democratic practices. However, as we have seen previously, Chehab saw this state of affairs as regrettable, and something to be fixed once the communities were reconciled.

At the outset of Chehab's term, Lebanon did not meet the full criteria for polyarchy, but it was not far off. Even amidst the crisis, free expression and association was permitted and many alternative sources of information available (although Chehab, interestingly, did not always see this as a good thing: in 1959, he complained to the UK ambassador that the Lebanese press was irresponsible and insufficiently accountable, and Lebanon would be better off if the number of newspapers was drastically cut).⁷⁹¹ While limited censorship was applied during the crisis, it was not fully adhered to and lifted shortly thereafter. Citizenship was also broadly inclusive – members of different segments enjoyed the same civil rights. Where Lebanon was most lacking democratic credentials in 1958 was in its representation: the 1957 elections had been neither free nor fair, which meant that the current parliament was heavily skewed towards the Loyalists.

Mindful of this issue, Chehab attempted to bypass the parliament as much as possible through the more representative government's special powers. While this may have been a better solution than relying on a non-representative parliament, it was insufficiently democratic. Recognition of this is likely why Chehab pushed to hold new parliamentary elections as quickly as possible. Chehab's immediate interest in promoting a fairer, more proportional sectarian distribution of posts in security and administration also helped bolster the country's democratic credentials.

While the parliament was not sufficiently representative, leaders were still accountable to their constituents, as illustrated by the case of Pierre Gemayel in February 1959: Amidst the sectarian-tinged disorder over Nasser's visit to Damascus, he was effectively forced to resign from the government by the Kataeb, on pain of losing control over the party he

⁷⁹¹ Crosthwaite to Rothnie, 29 Aug 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/24

founded.⁷⁹² This resignation, moreover, triggered further consociational bargaining, as the Sunni ministers, Karami and Oueini, sought a compromise to keep Gemayel on board.

Chehabist outcomes

National Unity

Given the depth of the abyss separating Lebanon's communities as he came to office, it is unsurprising that Chehab made the greatest advances towards cultivating 'national unity' in the first phase of his presidency. His careful management of former opposition politicians, especially his favoured prime minister Rachid Karami, helped reframe Lebanese sovereignty and independence as advantageous to Muslims as well as Christians. Nasser's acknowledgement of Lebanon's sovereignty, in both word and deed, further reinforced the trend. Over these 22 months, communal relations improved significantly. Chehab, as we saw when he attempted to resign from office, was himself a unifying figure for many Lebanese across different sects.

During this period, the country became more united, and people moved away from the extreme polarisation of ascriptive ties. Yet it is difficult to argue that significant progress was made towards the Chehabist goal of transcending ascriptive, communal ties through a shift in primary allegiance towards the nation. In fairness, that sort of transcendence was not one of the short-term objectives Chehab sought to fulfil before he could resign. Rather, his intention was to begin laying the foundation for a more robust national identity to develop.

Le Social/Modernisation

Similarly, Chehab's actions in this first phase were designed to facilitate modernisation, rationalisation, and social justice in the future more than the present. For example, rather than attempt to move past the allocation of posts on a sectarian basis, he simply tried to make that allocation fairer, and to make the recruitment process within each quota more meritocratic.⁷⁹³

⁷⁹² Roche to French Foreign Minister, 6 Mar 1959, CADN 91PO/B/111, No. 365, p. 6

⁷⁹³ Chancery (Beirut) to Levant Dept, 3 Oct 1958, FO 371/134134/1015/645

Chehab told Ambassador Crosthwaite that he “devoted one day a week to the problem since he had taken office, and he was determined that some progress should be made. It was not a question of changing a few senior officials; the whole system had to be overhauled to improve efficiency and check abuse.”⁷⁹⁴

In the first stage of Chehab’s presidency, the most significant step towards overhauling that system and furthering development and social justice was undoubtedly the IRFED surveys. Chehab and his government invested considerable time, effort, and resources so that the Mission could plan and execute a robust, scientific survey of socio-economic conditions across the country. To date, this remains the most comprehensive study of its kind on Lebanon. His hope was that the next administration, armed with reliable data, would be able to institute a modernisation and development agenda that recognised where need was greatest, and in time promote equality across Lebanon’s communities and regions.

However, during this time, we also see some early warnings of the problems that modernisation could present. 1959 and 1960 saw widespread strike action. One of the thorniest labour disputes concerned Lebanon’s many thousands of textile workers, who saw their livelihoods threatened by technological innovation and the inexpensive foreign imports a more efficient global system facilitated.

Conclusions

While Chehab’s stated objectives and priorities over the first phase of his presidency show a nascent ‘Chehabist’ ideology, many of his actions were in practice still consociational. In moments of acute crisis, Chehab favoured stability and security, and he was able to achieve it through traditional consociational mechanisms. Moreover, because his focus from 1958-60 was on ‘laying the groundwork’ rather than achieving the Chehabist outcomes of social justice, unity, and modernisation, his principles had far fewer opportunities to clash with the consociational system and reveal their fundamental incompatibility.

⁷⁹⁴ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 20 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/31

The 1958-1960 period also consolidated Chehab's rule and authority, allowing him to move ahead more aggressively in the second phase of his presidential term. However, as the country returned to peace, his broader Chehabist vision began to threaten Lebanon's consociational framework. Yet observers, as well as Chehab himself, continued to misdiagnose which of Chehab's characteristics and positions were dangerous:

I have mentioned more than once in this report the reluctance of President Chehab to give a strong lead in political matters. This reluctance has not diminished since his attempted resignation in July 1960; and there is no doubt that he finds his task distasteful. It does not follow that his presence is not continuously felt. He remains a potent symbol of national reconciliation; his influence is constantly at work straightening out minor political tangles; and he is actively devoted to the improvement of the country's administrative machinery. The impetus behind such efforts as are made in the fields of economic development and social betterment is largely his. And if he leaves political initiative to the politicians, he does so deliberately because (unlike his predecessors) he believes that in the long run the stability of the Lebanon and its survival as a democratic entity in the Arab world require this.⁷⁹⁵

This essentially Chehabist view would inform Chehab's policy making for the next four years, and lead him to pursue an agenda that undermined Lebanon's stability and democratic character.

⁷⁹⁵ Annual Review 1961 (371/164145/1011/1) pp. 8-9

5. Phase Two: Muscular Chehabism

In July 1960, General Fouad Chehab declared his intention to step down from the presidency. In what was surely Lebanon's strongest show of unity since the 1952 White Revolution, friends and foes alike descended en masse to demand the president stay in office. Seven long hours later, Chehab acceded to these demands, and in so doing accepted to continue his presidency into a second phase. With the country out of immediate danger, during this phase, he would be free to privilege an agenda of his own; and the spectacular show of support provoked by his resignation gave him a newfound authority and legitimacy. The French Ambassador again reminds us that this sort of politics would feel out of character for Chehab,

If he had the modesty to conclude, during our meeting yesterday, that this was a worrying sign of Lebanon's fragility, his political sense is sure enough to make him aware of the advantages he could, if he so wishes, take from this situation he created through his own initiative. Doubtless, his temperament will not allow him to govern authoritatively. But despite certain comments he made yesterday, he cannot ignore that he is now well positioned to impose his will on the deputies.⁷⁹⁶

And indeed, Chehab did not seize the opportunity to 'impose his will' in the way one might expect: For example, he proceeded to name Saeb Salam as premier, despite his personal dislike for the man, in accordance with the results of the elections. However, Chehab did use his newly-empowered position to pursue a more aggressive Chehabist approach to Lebanese politics and development.

In September 1960, the British ambassador found Chehab "in a gloomy mood about the world situation as a whole" in light of recent communist advances. Crosthwaite relates Chehab's explanation for his worry: "As a totalitarian country the Soviet Union was at an advantage over the democracies in its dealings with the under-developed countries, since trade and aid were more easily coordinated to suit policy". Chehab dismissed Crosthwaite's suggestion that the Russians may end up doing themselves more harm than good in their

⁷⁹⁶ Boisseson to French FM, 27 Jul 1960, CADN 91PO/B/42/1641, No. 1092, pp. 16-17

new launch adventures. In the midst of the of the Chehabist project, Chehab lamented that in Lebanon “even the Christians were not yet sufficiently alive to the dangers of Communism, and with the Moslems, without the Vatican to call them to order from time to time, things were worse, though it was true that Nasser was now engaged in a bitter struggle with Communism”.⁷⁹⁷

In this chapter, we will consider the evolution of the Chehabist project, and how unanticipated events – in particular, 1961’s abortive coup – altered its trajectory. From that time forward, security assumed a far more prominent position in Chehab’s agenda. We will also take a closer look at the presidential campaign of 1964, a crucial turning point when the future of the Chehabist project – and consociational stability – were set in motion. Finally, the chapter will look at the struggle between consociational and Chehabist imperatives over the course of the four-year period.

The Chehabist drive for socio-economic reforms

Whereas reform in the first stage of the Chehab presidency had focused on legislation, the second stage rapidly progressed on to actual implementation – while adjusting the regulatory decrees as necessary and correcting previous mistakes.⁷⁹⁸ This was because “it was realized at that time that a number of the provisions of the legislative and regulatory decrees had caused administrative hardships, and that in a number of areas jurisdictional conflicts had arisen”.⁷⁹⁹ In terms of specific administrative achievements, efforts were focused on specialist training, and developing job descriptions; Chehab also devolved authority down to field offices, and created more robust measures for inspection and guidance.⁸⁰⁰

The Lebanese economy had weathered the 1958 crisis surprisingly well, in large part because both the government and rebels went out of their way to avoid unnecessary economic disruption.⁸⁰¹ All major stakeholders were keen to preserve their country’s

⁷⁹⁷ Crosthwaite to FO, 6 Sep 1960, FO 371/151142/1015/33

⁷⁹⁸ Bashir (1965), p. 63

⁷⁹⁹ Bashir (1965), pp. 76-77

⁸⁰⁰ Bashir (1965), p. 81

⁸⁰¹ Crosthwaite to Secretary of State, Enclosure I to Despatch No. 43, 24 Apr 1959, FO 371/142208/1011/1

remarkable prosperity. Beirut had emerged as a regional economic hub with the foundation of the *mutasarrifiya* in Mount Lebanon. However, it was under the careful and purposive cultivation of French mandatory authorities and their local partners that it was transformed from an Ottoman provincial city to a major national capital.⁸⁰² This position was consolidated after WWII through industrial expansion and Lebanon's rise as middleman in international trade.⁸⁰³ Starting in the 1950s, Lebanon also became a destination for the capital pouring out from the oil producing countries of the Gulf.⁸⁰⁴ Strict banking secrecy legislation appealed to investors, while

Lebanon's weak central government, a government not inclined to impose radical measures of any sort, has provided an added attraction for investment. In the past and today the government has posed no nationalisation threat, no potential scare of control to repel the new and insecurely rich barons of the Arab East.⁸⁰⁵

Tourism, moreover, was ever expanding, based on two main categories of visitors to Lebanon: "rich Arabs ... who take villas on Mount Lebanon for the summer season" and "Europeans or Americans, often from cruise ships".⁸⁰⁶ Yet for all its success, Lebanon's economy was highly dependent on commercial and banking services. Agriculture and industry were sorely underdeveloped. The Lebanese periphery suffered in particular, as "the absence of large-scale industry minimizes work opportunities and discourages mobility. Industry is constrained by the paucity of natural resources".⁸⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the traditional guild system which had structured Lebanese industry was in decline, but unions had yet to properly fill that void.⁸⁰⁸ By 1963, the UK reports "sign of malaise", as unresolved issues surrounding transit trade and a saturated Lebanese market discouraged Arab investment.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰² Edde (2009)

⁸⁰³ Salem (1973), p. 43, 46

⁸⁰⁴ Salem (1973), p. 42

⁸⁰⁵ Salem (1973), pp. 43-44

⁸⁰⁶ Eaden to Earl of Home, 20 Jul 1963, FO 371/170352/1102/1, p. 4

⁸⁰⁷ Salem (1973), p. 45

⁸⁰⁸ Salem (1973), pp. 45-46

⁸⁰⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 19 Jan 1963, FO 371/170342/1011/1, p. 3

Economic disparities across religious confessions and geographic regions made both sectarian and socio-economic disputes more volatile. Chamoun had not been wholly unsympathetic to the need for development in Lebanon. From the 1950s onwards, public works projects had taken place on a limited scale. The first major long-term project of this kind was the Litani Power and Irrigation scheme.⁸¹⁰ According to Sheikh Najib Alamuddine, who sat on the original Litani Board, the project stalled due to external interference: “Powerful foreign interests were determined to sabotage it and deprive Lebanon of the waters of the Litani river”.⁸¹¹ The Planning and Development Board under Chamoun also submitted a five-year plan for economic development in February 1958, but it fell apart along with Chamoun’s presidency.⁸¹² In 1962, the Planning Ministry announced that it had asked the IRFED team to prepare a new Five-Year Plan for 1964-1968.⁸¹³

Chehab’s administrative reforms were more effective than any which came before him, but the effort had its shortcomings; Salem writes that under Chehab, “planning was encouraged personally, but the Ministry lacked the data, experience, personnel, and the extensive political and bureaucratic support needed to be effective”.⁸¹⁴ Another issue was that, at every new phase of the reform project, brand new committees and instruments were established to design and oversee progress, resulting in redundancy and inefficiency. Chehab’s reform programme also arguably placed too much emphasis on “administrative and financial controls”, which upset progress towards devolution by making the system highly rigid.⁸¹⁵ In the second phase of Chehab’s presidency, this rigidity complicated reform implementation. Nonetheless, the year of Chehab’s attempted resignation was largely “quiet and prosperous”.⁸¹⁶

Public works were sluggish during the first Chehabist phase. With the second phase of Chehab’s presidency, public works spending soared: In 1962, the government spent LL

⁸¹⁰ Bashir (1965), p. 31

⁸¹¹ Alamuddin (1987), p. 116

⁸¹² Bashir (1965), p. 31

⁸¹³ ‘Announce prefiguration d’un projet de Plan Quinquennal’, Office of the Minister, Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, 31 Dec 1962

⁸¹⁴ Salem (1973), p. 136

⁸¹⁵ Bashir (1965), p. 83

⁸¹⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 10 Jan 1961, FO 371/158939/1011/1, p. 8

144,815,000 on public works versus LL 53,150,000 in 1961, and just shy of combined total of public works spending for the past three years.⁸¹⁷ The 1963 budget would add an additional LL 20 million to the Ministry of Public Works alone.⁸¹⁸ In both years, the lions' share of public works spending went towards the expansion and improvement of roads, and rural water and electricity supplies. Although the increase in spending would inevitably strain Lebanon's reserves, as the UK First Commercial Secretary in Lebanon commented in 1963, "with public debt at less than £4 a head there seems little cause for immediate worry on that score".⁸¹⁹ Meanwhile, the cost of living remained fairly stable, although the government made moves to reduce it. For example, in 1962, new regulations lowered the retail price of pharmaceuticals by 20 to 60%.⁸²⁰ In 1963, Chehab presided over consultations with local and French experts on how the country's tax structure might be amended "to shift part of the burden of taxation from the poor to the rich".⁸²¹

With this in mind, the projects pursued by the government during this phase included a long-overdue reform of the outdated Labour Law, a rise in the minimum wage to reflect increasing cost of living, and various infrastructural projects to connect and modernise remote villages.⁸²² As the power of trade unions slowly grew, the Director-General of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Dr. Rida Wahid, pushed through a law allowing Collective Agreements and began to ratify long-neglected ILO conventions.⁸²³

It is evident that the unions are treated with more consideration by Dr. Rida Wahid, who is the protégé of President Chehab, than by his predecessors... Strengthening of trade unionism is a pre-requisite of the social reforms desired by the President, and Dr. Wahid and secured ILO agreement to the despatch of an expert to train and develop Lebanese unions.⁸²⁴

⁸¹⁷ 'Lebanon – Economic Report 1962', 26 Feb 1963, FO 371/170352/1101/2, p. 3

⁸¹⁸ 'Lebanon – Economic Report 1962', 26 Feb 1963, FO 371/170352/1101/2, p. 4

⁸¹⁹ Eaden to Earl of Home, 20 Jul 1963, FO 371/170352/1102/1, p. 5

⁸²⁰ 'Lebanon – Economic Report 1962', 26 Feb 1963, FO 371/170352/1101/2, p. 1

⁸²¹ 'Lebanon – Economic Report for July to September, 1963', 15 Oct 1963, FO 371/170352/1101/5

⁸²² Hankey to Foreign Office, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, p. 6

⁸²³ Archer to Treganowan, 25 Jan 1963, FO 371/170371/2181/2

⁸²⁴ Archer to Treganowan, 25 Jan 1963, FO 371/170371/2181/2, p. 4

In anticipation of growing energy needs, the Litani River project was revived, though progress remained slow.⁸²⁵ The government also moved forward with its plan for a new law governing Social Security, which after much delay would enter into effect on 1 May 1965. Among other provisions, the Social Security Law would “[provide] for sickness and maternity benefits, workmen’s compensation, family allowances and termination grants”.⁸²⁶

There were two “main” development plans underway during this phase: The Plan Vert, or Green Plan, and a popular housing scheme.⁸²⁷ The Plan Vert was designed to advance land reclamation and reforestation, while mitigating social issues including internal migration. In the early 1960s, technological advancements and cheap foreign imports meant that many rural Lebanese could no longer support themselves on the income they gained from their land. This had spurred mass urbanisation as young people in particular moved to the cities in search of work. Meanwhile, the land they left behind suffered from neglect, erosion, and environment degradation. The situation was self-perpetuating, as the initial costs of repairs were beyond the means of most small farmers.⁸²⁸ Moreover, as Salem notes, “Agriculture in Lebanon remains under strong traditional influences, which impede its efficiency and restrict its productive capacity. Apparently, few farmers know of the possibility of government support and most distrust government”.⁸²⁹

To address these issues, in early 1962 Chehab launched a ten-year program, the Plan Vert, to revitalise these agricultural lands, farms and orchards as part of a strategy of rural development. With the assistance of the UN and FAO, the project would train Lebanese experts in ‘modern techniques’ and best practices to combat deforestation, over-grazing, and other agricultural issues. The idea was that the local trainees would then go out and offer assistance to Lebanese farmers, assessing the work necessary to repair their land and

⁸²⁵ Eaden to Earl of Home, 20 Jul 1963, FO 371/170352/1102/1, p. 4

⁸²⁶ ‘Lebanon – Economic Report for July to September, 1963’, 15 Oct 1963, FO 371/170352/1101/5

⁸²⁷ Hankey to Foreign Office, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, p. 5

⁸²⁸ ‘Note sommaire sur le Plan Vert Libanais’, December 1959, p. 7

⁸²⁹ Salem (1973), p. 133

offering help in the form of technical assistance, consultation, and subsidized equipment and plant stocks.⁸³⁰

While Chehab's agricultural reforms in general yielded mixed results, the Green Plan was fairly successful in its efforts "to help the farmer utilize new land, reclaim formerly arable land, build agricultural roads, and undertake reforestation on a major scale."⁸³¹

The other key development goal in the second phase of Chehab's presidency was a public housing project. In the autumn of 1962, the government passed strong legislation to provide low-cost housing to low income Lebanese, with the first new constructions set to break ground in 1964.⁸³² By mid-1963, little progress had been made towards implementation, and the project had "not gone beyond the stage of a bill said to be under study by a "Housing Council" set up for the purpose in September 1962."⁸³³ Sure enough, 1964 came and went, and the law was "substantially revised" in 1965.⁸³⁴ According to Salem, the housing project was stymied by the failure to develop robust data collection stymied in Lebanon.⁸³⁵ In August 1963, the Monetary and Credit Act was promulgated, which included the establishment of a Lebanese Central Bank (the Bank itself would open at the end of March 1964). The law was the first real attempt to regulate the Lebanese banking industry.⁸³⁶

Chehab pursued multiple tracks towards stabilising the country's economic foundation, including efforts towards industrialisation.

But with industrialisation the Lebanese Government is faced with what must be the central and most vital question in the economic field. Can the Lebanon afford to maintain its policy of (relatively) free trade? For years Lebanese industrialists with a tiny home market and with most nearby markets closed by Arab brotherly love, have been crying out for more protection. ... With the weak but growing power of the trade

⁸³⁰ 'Note sommaire sur le Plan Vert Libanais', December 1959, pp. 1-3

⁸³¹ Salem (1973), p. 132

⁸³² Archer to Tregnowan, 17 Jan 1963, FO 371/170371/2181/2

⁸³³ Hankey to Foreign Office, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, p. 5

⁸³⁴ Morris to Ministry of Labour, 10 May 1966, LAB 13/1940/54

⁸³⁵ Salem (1973), p. 130

⁸³⁶ 'A New Currency and Credit Law for Lebanon', Elias Saba, *Middle East Express*, 25 Mar 1964

unions being added to that of the industrialists, the Government will probably have to yield.⁸³⁷

In 1961, the IRFED Mission issued a 900-page report in two tomes on Lebanon's needs and capabilities. This report "greatly influenced" the government, and led it to ask "the IRFED mission to extend its stay in Lebanon and make some specific plans regarding the implementation of some of the proposed recommendations, especially in respect to the revival of the rural areas economically and socially".⁸³⁸

In 1962, the Ministry of Planning issued a statement announcing its intention, after the success of the IRFED study, to engage the organisation to develop a five-year plan for development in Lebanon for the period 1964-68.⁸³⁹ Its activities would be drawn up through ten sub-plans, relating to roads, electricity, hydraulics, agriculture, fishing, tourism, industrial orientation, commercial orientation, teaching, and health.⁸⁴⁰

In a liberal society, according to IRFED, directed planning required coordination between the public and private sectors in terms of socio-economic policy and specific objectives. However, where this kind of collaboration is not possible at present, the first stage of planning instead must focus on harmonising administrative activities with public investments; through the judicious use of economic stimulants, the private sector can be brought into alignment. This idea of principled, realistic, incremental progress underpinned IRFED's Five-Year Plan for development in Lebanon.⁸⁴¹ In June 1963, the cabinet appointed three economists to study the plans before implementation.⁸⁴² Once again, however, a beautifully designed, comprehensive plan yielded mixed results. In part, observers complained that the Planning Ministry was just "lumping all types of projects

⁸³⁷ Eaden to Earl of Home, 20 Jul 1963, FO 371/170352/1102/1, p.7

⁸³⁸ Bashir (1965), p. 120

⁸³⁹ 'Annonce préfiguration d'un projet de Plan quinquennal', Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, 31 Dec 1960

⁸⁴⁰ 'Propositions d'actions generales pour l'elaboration du plan – Introduction aux schemas', Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, Mission IRFED-Liban, Nov 1962, IRFED, Annex 1

⁸⁴¹ 'Propositions d'actions generales pour l'elaboration du plan – Introduction aux schemas', Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, Mission IRFED-Liban, Nov 1962, IRFED, pp. C4-C5

⁸⁴² Bashir (1965), pp. 32-33

into a five-year plan, with little or no attempt to analyse them or to show their independence and objectives”.⁸⁴³

The foundation of the Central Bank in the spring of 1964 heightened unease among the merchant class. Yet “even the prosperous Lebanese ruling class continues to be haunted by the intangible basis of their economy” as various factors keep a chokehold on Lebanese exports.⁸⁴⁴

In the second phase of his presidency, Chehab made significant advances towards socio-economic reforms and development. However, most of the projects were still in their early stages in 1964, and Chehab was spending at an unsustainable rate. And the Chehabist project for *Le Social* unfolded against an ominous backdrop of security crackdown and expansion, after an attempted coup against the president in the final moments of 1961.

The Abortive Coup

From the time Chehab withdrew his resignation in 1960 until the end of 1961, life in Lebanon was fairly stable. As noted, the country continued to prosper economically. There were a few security incidents, including (unexploded) dynamite found outside the house of Prime Minister Saeb Salam in March, and a small bomb outside parliament. There were also explosions in buildings which housed five pro-Nasser newspapers, and an escalating war of words between Nasser and several Lebanese Christian parties. Lawyers in Beirut went on strike in April 1961 to protest the accreditation of an Egyptian-subsidised law school in the city – the strike continued for the rest of the year, and dominated headlines. In late September 1961, a successful *coup d'état* took place in Syria, leading to the country's secession from the UAR.

Also over the course of the year, the government – seemingly at Nasser's behest – had been taking increasingly hostile action against the *Parti Populaire Syrien*, or PPS. When the Syrians revolted against Nasser, momentum lit up the ranks of disaffected Lebanese: “Anti-

⁸⁴³ Salem (1973), pp. 135-36

⁸⁴⁴ Riches to Stewart, 1 Jan 1966, FO 371/180766/1011/3

Nasserite groups ... miscalculated the Syria events as the inception of the retreat of Nasserism in the area” and were thus emboldened.⁸⁴⁵

In the early hours of the morning of 31 December 1961, the PPS in cooperation with several disgruntled army officers set out to seize control of Lebanon. They proceeded to abduct several prominent figures in the military, capture the telecoms ministry (where they ineffectively attempted to cut the country’s phone lines), and surround the Ministry of Defence. The events of that night would trigger an unprecedented security crackdown which altered the course of Chehab’s presidency and the Chehabist project.

Unbeknownst to the PPS and their co-conspirators, a mole tipped off the Deuxième Bureau several hours before the coup was set in motion.⁸⁴⁶ In addition, Chehab later claimed that the authorities had been “75% sure” that such a plot was underway since November.⁸⁴⁷ However, the government was not fully on guard. It was unaware that army officers were among the conspirators.⁸⁴⁸ The plotters had selected the date because many army officers would be on leave for the holidays, diminishing the ability of the security forces to respond.⁸⁴⁹ While only a handful of officers were knowingly complicit, they were able to mobilise unwitting troops on the night of the attack by informing them that a coup was being instigated by Kamal Jumblatt in cooperation with rogue army factions.⁸⁵⁰

While this ploy may have bought the plotters an hour or two, the army was still able to swiftly bring the coup to an end with minimal casualties. Over the following months, Chehab “decided to impose tight security and military control over the political society in Lebanon. The army secret services or Second Bureau became Shehab’s main apparatus to achieve the above”.⁸⁵¹ Chehab’s perceived overreliance on the security services would fuel considerable dissent in the years – and decades – that followed.

⁸⁴⁵ Kabbara (1988), p. 167

⁸⁴⁶ Crosthwaite to Hiller, 15 Sep 1962, FO 371/164149/1015/78; Beshara (2005), p. 129

⁸⁴⁷ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 5 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/9, pp. 2-3

⁸⁴⁸ Beshara (2005), p. 132

⁸⁴⁹ Deposition of Fouad Awad, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 33

⁸⁵⁰ Deposition of Fouad Awad, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 33

⁸⁵¹ Kabbara (1988), p. 167

The PPS

The primary instigators of the coup attempt were the Syrian Popular Party (PPS; this party is known in the present by the acronym SSNP), a radically nationalistic grouping that sought the union of Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Jordan into Greater Syria, with 'Cyprus as its star'. By 1961, the PPS had been nursing wounds inflicted by the Lebanese state for over a decade, since a previous failed uprising in 1949 led to its banning and the trial and execution of the Party's founder and ideologue, Antoun Saadeh.

In the wake of the 1958 crisis, the PPS felt ill-used. Their fighters had joined the Loyalists because the PPS vehemently opposed the UAR's union of Syria with Egypt; they fought as Loyalist shock-troops in some of the summer's fiercest battles. In contrast to most other Loyalist factions, the PPS also strongly supported Chehab's election, paying tribute to his rational, 'military' approach and even temperament. After President Chamoun legally reinstated the party as one of his final acts in office, the PPS believed it was in the ascendant, with a new, more sympathetic president coming into office.⁸⁵² However, as the autumn progressed, the party rapidly became disillusioned.

In December 1958, the PPS clashed with the United National Front in Aarsal, leading the cabinet to discuss re-instituting the party ban that Chamoun had lifted.⁸⁵³ However, nothing happened until February 1959 when Lebanon expelled a number of non-Lebanese PPS members from the country, many of whom were defectors from the Syrian military.⁸⁵⁴

The party was actively working to undermine and sabotage the Syrian leadership, and believed that the expulsions were pushed by the UAR in their ongoing economic talks with Lebanon, and as such, a clear sign of Chehab kowtowing to Nasser.⁸⁵⁵ The PPS was a persistent thorn in Nasser's side, and it was also not very popular among most Lebanese – making it a relatively palatable concession for the government.

Over the course of 1959, the PPS felt increasingly persecuted by the authorities, and increasingly "excluded... from access to the economic and political resources of the

⁸⁵² Beshara (2005), p. 48-49

⁸⁵³ Roche to French Foreign Minister, 26 Dec 1958, CADN 91PO/B/110, No. 1642

⁸⁵⁴ Beshara (2005), p. 187, n24

⁸⁵⁵ Beshara (2005), pp. 52-53

state”.⁸⁵⁶ In August, a plot was uncovered to blow up the offices of its mouthpiece, *al-Bina*. The PPS believed the attack was sponsored by Kamal Jumblatt, in retribution for a recent *al-Bina* editorial connecting him with the Naim Moughabghab murder.⁸⁵⁷

Despite their ‘frustration’, the PPS continued to adopt a conciliatory position towards Chehab and his regime, in part to support their lone MP, Assad al-Ashkar. After Moughabghab was killed, it looked like the PPS had a good shot at filling his vacancy in the Chouf. The PPS candidate was backed by both Chamoun and the late MP’s family, but still lost the by-election to Jumblatt’s candidate by a considerable margin (8,908 votes to 6,051).⁸⁵⁸ To most observers, this outcome was likely due to an aversion to the party among some voters who would normally have backed Chamoun, as well as the eleventh-hour decision by Majid Arslan to support the candidate of his rival, Jumblatt.⁸⁵⁹ To the PPS, however, their loss was a direct consequence of the other side’s corruption and the interference of the army in the by-election.⁸⁶⁰

The final straw for the PPS came in the 1960 general elections when, despite the enlargement of the parliament, they failed to win a single seat. It promptly announced through *al-Bina* that it would now stand in opposition to the Chehab regime, which it characterised as “an unhappy blend of a dishonest dictatorship and a wishy-washy parliamentarism”.⁸⁶¹

By late 1961, the PPS felt it had been frozen out of all the official channels, and that it was only a matter of time before the regime pursued the party in earnest. Buoyed by the success of the Syrian coup, the party began to strategise how it might protect its own interests and future in Lebanon.

The coup attempt

According to the text of the third indictment, issued on 28 May 1962, the goals of the coup attempt were “modifying the Constitution by illegal means, provoking an armed rebellion

⁸⁵⁶ Beshara (2005), p. 53

⁸⁵⁷ Beshara (2005), p. 53

⁸⁵⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 3 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/27

⁸⁵⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 3 Oct 1959, FO 371/142210/1015/27, p. 2

⁸⁶⁰ Beshara (2005), p. 53

⁸⁶¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 13 Jul 1960, FO 371/151141/1015/25, p. 4

against the established powers in order to prevent them from exercising their duties, usurping civil and military powers, provoking a civil war and slaughter by arming the Lebanese against one another, inciting to murder and sabotage, kidnapping several officers and depriving them of their liberty by force, attempting to kidnap statesmen and politicians”.⁸⁶²

While the PPS would probably not agree fully with that characterisation, depositions with the key PPS suspects clarify the motivations for the plot: In large part, it was a response to the party’s perceived oppression by the current regime; as well as the party’s conviction that true progress and justice could only be achieved with the abolition of political sectarianism.⁸⁶³ The plotters hoped that the establishment of a secular, modern and just state in Lebanon could serve as a model to the other states of the Fertile Crescent, who in time would unite as a single, unified Syrian state.⁸⁶⁴ The PPS members confessed to misrepresenting their party doctrine in 1958 when their authorisation was reinstated by asserting a commitment to Lebanese independence; however, it is hard to believe that the authorities genuinely believed the party had renounced its *raison d’être* of uniting Greater Syria.⁸⁶⁵

The central army officers involved in the plot, on the other hand, were largely concerned by the perceived failings of Lebanon’s security forces and its leadership, particularly the Deuxième Bureau. According to the indictment, “they claimed that the Bureau was subscribed to partisanship and favouritism, rewarding the privileged and pursuing without cause those they frowned upon”; the only way they saw to remedy the status quo was to seize control of the military.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶² ‘Third Indictment in the PPS Plot Affair’, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 1

⁸⁶³ Depositions of Abdallah Saade; Inaam Raad; and Bechid Obeid, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, pp. 22-23

⁸⁶⁴ Depositions of Inaam Raad; Assad al-Ashkar; and Mohammad Baalbaki, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, pp. 22-23

⁸⁶⁵ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 23

⁸⁶⁶ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 24

The indictment text describes how the first seeds of the plot took root over the course of meetings between Captain Chawki Khairallah and the PPS leadership in the summer of 1961. The success of the Syrian military coup in late September convinced the men that a coup could also succeed in Lebanon. By mid-October, the idea had been brought to the PPS Superior Council for discussion. Despite several resignations by council members who opposed the plan, it was eventually approved. The final preparatory meeting took place on 29 December, fixing the details of how the action would unfold at 2:15 AM on the morning of 31 December.⁸⁶⁷

The coup was largely financed by the PPS itself, through a donation campaign organised by the party's leader; contributions from the party leadership themselves; as well as some contributions from sympathetic forces in Jordan.⁸⁶⁸ According to the indictment, the decision to stage a coup was only taken after the PPS believed it had exhausted all legal avenues for change, including appeals to Raymond Edde and Camille Chamoun.⁸⁶⁹

Within the plan itself, there was a division of labour between the PPS and the officer contingent. The party would occupy the telecommunications ministry, in order to cut phone lines between Lebanon's major cities. They were also tasked with kidnapping a number of top-ranking officers, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of Parliament, and Ministers Pierre Gemayel and Kamal Jumblatt. The PPS forces would also support the military operations, and facilitate the treatment of the wounded at the American University Hospital in Beirut. The officers, for their part, would occupy the Ministry of Defence, and kidnap several high-ranking officers who lived in the Ministry's vicinity.⁸⁷⁰ Joint operations included seizing radio broadcasters, the Emergency Services barracks, and the Kataeb House in Saifi.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁶⁷ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, pp. 25-27

⁸⁶⁸ Depositions of Abdallah Saade and Assad al-Achkar, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 29

⁸⁶⁹ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 30

⁸⁷⁰ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, pp. 34-35

⁸⁷¹ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 36

The subject of who would abduct President Chehab proved contentious, with neither side wanting to take responsibility. Ultimately, the matter was settled by making it another joint operation. Soldiers would escort PPS men in military uniforms to the Presidential Palace, where they would inform the Republican Guard that they needed to transport the president to meet with the Army Commander immediately for a 'special mission'.⁸⁷² Once inside, they would tell the president that a coup d'état was underway, and they needed to escort him to the Army General Staff for safety. The plotters chose '*Hassoun*', or 'goldfinch', as their password for the operation.⁸⁷³

In the end, the conspirators were too slow and unprepared for their task. In addition to the earlier information leaks, the failure to cut a secret telephone line between the Defence Ministry and the Internal Security Forces allowed the alarm to be raised almost immediately, and armoured vehicles had deployed in Sarba before they could reach it.⁸⁷⁴ This failure to prioritise the operation to capture Chehab is held up by the PPS as a primary reason for the coup's failure.⁸⁷⁵

Had the attack succeeded, the men hoped to install Jawad Boulos as President of the Republic and Suleiman al-Ali as Prime Minister.⁸⁷⁶ Chehab would be exiled, and the current parliament dissolved. A new military command would be installed and promptly seal Lebanon's borders, while communiques were broadcast to the general public explaining the rationale for the coup. A provisional government would be introduced, which would include several PPS leaders; the new government's policy would emphasise secularisation and the abolition of political confessionalism; social security legislation; an updated electoral law; the adoption of a truly neutral foreign policy; the establishment of an economy on a more productive, pro-industry basis; and closer coordination between the

⁸⁷² *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 36

⁸⁷³ *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 58

⁸⁷⁴ Confessions of Sobhi Abou Obeid and Ali Hajj Hassan, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 50

⁸⁷⁵ Beshara (2005), pp. 128-29

⁸⁷⁶ Depositions of Inaam Raad and Mohammad Baalbaki, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 31

countries of the Fertile Crescent. No real preparations were made in the event of failure.⁸⁷⁷ Indeed, the conspirators were so sure of their success that in the days leading up to the attempted coup they despatched representatives to several international capitals so they would be in place to help persuade those states to recognise the new regime.⁸⁷⁸

The aftermath

The British embassy notified the Foreign Office of the incident around noon on 31 December; at that point, it was characterised as follows: “There was some trouble in the army last night in the course of which dissident officers apparently occupied Ministry of Defence for a time and various high ranking officers were seized”. However, order had been swiftly restored. Although there were rumours of PPS involvement, it was at that point presented as chiefly an army affair.⁸⁷⁹ The Lebanese government convened in Jounieh that morning, and its swift response was to ban the PPS, appoint a special investigator, and appoint ministerial committees to draft legislation on:

1. Observation (*muraqabat*) of party sources of income, activities and aims in Lebanon
2. Organisation of the affairs of publications, press, radio and television and observation of the incomes of papers
3. Entry and residence of foreigners, and political asylum
4. Clandestine entry into the country
5. The organisation of refugees’ affairs and residence.⁸⁸⁰

The immediate reaction from all political sides was that the coup was “crazy”; the UK ambassador elaborated that “it is policy of PPS to work for a ‘Greater Syria’, but it passes comprehension how they can have hoped to achieve this end in present circumstances”.⁸⁸¹ In a follow-up telegram two hours later, Ambassador Crosthwaite warned that the UK must

⁸⁷⁷ Deposition of Inaam Raad, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, pp. 38-9

⁸⁷⁸ Depositions of Sobhi Abou Obeid; Inaam Raad; and Mohammad Baalbaki, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 32

⁸⁷⁹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 31 Dec 1961, FO 371/164146/1015/4

⁸⁸⁰ BBC Monitoring, 4 Jan 1962, in FO 371/164146/1015/5

⁸⁸¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 1 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/1

“expect to be accused of responsibility” due to British support for Chamoun, an ally of the PPS, and various rumours circulating about UK interest in the Fertile Crescent.⁸⁸² At the time of the coup attempt, “by an unfortunate coincidence a report had just reached President Chehab of some alleged decision by NATO which involved redrawing the map of the Middle East”.⁸⁸³

And indeed, such speculation dominated the Lebanese press in the following days, as “all commentators agree that Her Majesty’s Government were behind the coup, which was a link in the chain of imperialist conspiracies against Arab socialism. ... There are several feature articles about British intrigue and Britain’s failure to understand what is going on in the Arab world”.⁸⁸⁴ When the UK ambassador complained to Chehab that Jumblatt, who was Minister of the Interior at the time, had been telling the press that the UK was behind the coup attempt:

The President nearly exploded. “Why can’t that man hold his tongue?” The Prime Minister and (I think) Gemayel had already been on to him about Jumblatt’s remarks. ... Jumblatt must see some electoral advantage in taking this line. He complained about all Lebanese politicians. Gemayel had been just as embarrassing last year with his public challenge to Nasser to give the Syrians a chance of expressing their opinions.⁸⁸⁵

By 10 January, however, press accusations seemed to have shifted away from Britain towards Jordan and the Saudi royal family.⁸⁸⁶ Public references by Jordan’s King Hussein “to the Fertile Crescent, to ex-President Chamoun and to President Chehab’s knowledge of past Jordanian help to the PPS did not help matters”.⁸⁸⁷ The UK ambassador seems to reject the accusations, praising King Hussein’s tremendous restraint in the face of this abuse from the Lebanese press and authorities. However, in his memoirs, Boutros reveals

⁸⁸² Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 1 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/1(A)

⁸⁸³ Annual Report 1962 (371/170342), p. 2

⁸⁸⁴ Beeley to Foreign Office, 2 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/2(A)

⁸⁸⁵ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 5 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/9, p. 3

⁸⁸⁶ Beeley to Foreign Office, 10 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/19

⁸⁸⁷ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 19 Jan 1963, FO 371/170342/1011/1, p. 3

that the government early on seized PPS funds furnished by Jordan, but opted not to publicly name the country in the interests of regional harmony and stability.⁸⁸⁸

There was no real suspicion of involvement by new Syrian regime, which was “viewed with considerable sympathy by Christians here and in business circles generally, and in spite of continuing opposition from Moslems some progress was at first made towards establishing better relations”.⁸⁸⁹ During a British visit to Chehab on 7 February, the President “accepted that we had not been responsible for the coup, though he added that we had a moral responsibility for it”.⁸⁹⁰ Meanwhile,

Authority to deal with the situation passed tacitly from the Government to the Army, acting on the instructions of the President. The country was combed for members of the PPS, and by the 6th of February more than 6,400 people had been arrested, 2,400 of whom were still under detention in an improvised camp at the Beirut sports stadium. Conditions in the camp were at first appalling. Measures of this severity had been unknown in the short history of this easy-going country. They were due in part to the exasperation of the senior officers charged with the security of the country, most of whom had been kidnapped in their pyjamas. And in part to a wave of hysteria which swept the country. To most people it seemed incredible that a coup should have been attempted without some assurance of outside support.⁸⁹¹

In the wake of the failed coup, the security crackdown was severe. Fouad Boutros, who was Minister of Justice at the time of the attempt, claims that around 10,000 people were arrested over the first 20 days.⁸⁹² The atrocious conditions for detainees in makeshift detention centres led both the Patriarch and Raymond Edde to voice concerns.⁸⁹³ In response, the Ministry of Defence issued a statement insinuating that the army’s critics

⁸⁸⁸ Boutros (2009), pp. 98-99

⁸⁸⁹ Crosthwaite to FO, 19 Jan 1963, FO 371/170342/1011/1, p. 4

⁸⁹⁰ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 19 Jan 1963, FO 371/170342/1011/1, p. 3

⁸⁹¹ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 19 Jan 1963, FO 371/170342/1011/1, pp 1-2

⁸⁹² Boutros (2009), p. 95

⁸⁹³ Crosthwaite to Earl of Home, 12 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/30, p. 2

constituted “a second Fifth Column ... in support of the armed Fifth Column which staged the coup”.⁸⁹⁴

On 5 January, Chehab conveyed to the UK ambassador that “he was satisfied with the way the clearing-up operations were proceeding.” Although innocent people would have been caught in the dragnet, they would be released in due course. Chehab had opted not to declare a state of emergency because “Lebanon was a democracy and should operate as such, even if the limitations this imposed sometimes created difficulties”.⁸⁹⁵ Boutros corroborates this claim, recalling that the president made the same argument on the morning of the coup itself.⁸⁹⁶

The Lebanese Deputy Chief-of-Staff informed the UK military attaché on 26 January that arrests were down, and around 1,500 “persons still in prison awaiting questioning”.⁸⁹⁷ Based on the army’s daily communiques over the course of January, the UK estimated that 5,500 arrests had taken place; and that “arms seized comprise 85 machine guns, 65 other automatic weapons, 363 rifles, 336 revolvers and sundry other items”.⁸⁹⁸ Shortly thereafter, however, Justice Minister Boutros declared that there were in fact 2,437 people still under detention, out of a total of 6,435 arrests to date.⁸⁹⁹

By late February, few security measures had been relaxed: “Roadblocks continue to be maintained at strategic points on principal roads, and by night in Beirut” while military activity continued in PPS strongholds in the Metn and Koura.⁹⁰⁰

The intensity of the Security Forces’ response was justified by the gravity of the plot, as well as their success in stopping it. According to Boutros, the use of force and repression in the aftermath of the coup was warranted.⁹⁰¹ But it was also driven by outrage: For example, when the UK ambassador claimed that cypher telegrams to a British company

⁸⁹⁴ Crosthwaite to Earl of Home, 12 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/30, p. 3

⁸⁹⁵ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 5 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/9

⁸⁹⁶ Boutros (2009), p. 95

⁸⁹⁷ Crosthwaite to War Office, 29 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/48

⁸⁹⁸ Edden to Figg, 9 Feb 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/58

⁸⁹⁹ Crosthwaite to War Office, 29 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/48

⁹⁰⁰ Edden to Figg, 20 Feb 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/59, p. 2

⁹⁰¹ ‘F. Boutros révèle le plan du complot PPS’, *L’Orient*, 7 Feb 1962, p. 4

were being held by the Lebanese authorities, Chehab excused it as “the result of some over-zealous general disposition. He pointed out that the senior officers concerned had been kidnapped in the middle of the night in their pyjamas, and were feeling tough”.⁹⁰²

The country had mostly settled down by Easter, and the summer was fairly quiet. Since most of those initially detained had been released, there was “no real excitement” about the trial of the plotters over the summer, especially as it dragged on and the prospect of death sentences “receded”.⁹⁰³

Nonetheless, the coup had profound consequences for the future of the state and the Chehabist approach. The most serious consequence of the attempted coup d'état in 1961 was the empowerment of the Deuxième Bureau and its interference in Lebanese politics. The Lebanese Deuxième Bureau, its military intelligence service, was created as part of the Lebanese Army in 1945. Until the PPS's attempted coup d'état, however, the Bureau did not heavily intervene in Lebanese politics, and certainly did not do so openly.⁹⁰⁴ This is not to say that it had not already provoked some consternation: in the run-up to the 1960 general election, the French military attaché warned of vote rigging: “There is a dangerous game unfolding in the shadow of President Chehab, in principle on his order or at least in his line, but which carries the mark of the head of the Deuxième Bureau, Lt-Col. Antoun Saad”.⁹⁰⁵

The Bureau, and the Army in general, were loyal to their former commander. However, this could interfere in the normal conduct of government. Several ministers grew exasperated by the senior members of the security forces' unwillingness of to work with them directly – orders had to come from Chehab himself.⁹⁰⁶

Yet after the coup the Bureau was able to openly assume a more active and aggressive role on the pretext of ‘defending the regime’. In his memoirs, Boutros confirmed that,

⁹⁰² Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 5 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/9

⁹⁰³ Annual Report 1962 (371/170342), p. 5

⁹⁰⁴ Freiha (1980), p. 51

⁹⁰⁵ Lt-Col de Reals to Defence Intelligence, 18 Mar 1960, CADN 91PO/B/111, No.250, pp. 2-3

⁹⁰⁶ Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4, pp. 5-6

There is no doubt that the attempted coup d'état reinforced the position and role of the Deuxième Bureau at the very heart of the Lebanese regime which still felt threatened. The unanimous condemnation of the coup d'état by the Lebanese provided the Deuxième Bureau with the favourable conditions for it to assert its stranglehold on the situation in Lebanon on the pretext that there were cracks which Lebanon's enemies could exploit. Some officers of the Deuxième Bureau deliberately exaggerated the dangers that threatened the system and the regime, and tried to intervene in every detail of Lebanese political life as well as the press, associations, and parties. Conscious of this state of affairs, the president of the Republic tried to permanently separate security requirements from those of democratic political life in Lebanon.⁹⁰⁷

Nonetheless, Boutros rejects the suggestion that Lebanon under Chehab was any manner of 'police state'; Chehab just wanted to impose rational, military thinking, and to keep the country secure.⁹⁰⁸ Chehab himself later insisted to the UK ambassador that he was a "believer in freedom", noting that "he could have taken over the country any time he wanted without bloodshed. But he did not and would not do so".⁹⁰⁹

Fouad Chehab came into the presidency as a non-politician, and as such he had no natural constituency or support base. To bolster his regime, Chehab may have substituted his base in the army, and the Deuxième Bureau in particular. In any case, this was certainly the popular perception. In 1974, a former chief of the Deuxième Bureau, Gaby Lahoud, stated the dynamic in more positive terms, saying that "the Lebanese people considered the Army to be the party of President-General Fouad Chehab".⁹¹⁰ The critics' perspective, however, was that "the Bureau was used extensively by Chehab to bolster his own power-base and to help him bypass and compete with the country's traditional power structure".⁹¹¹

Regardless of how much authority Chehab retained over the Bureau, it clearly escalated the scope of its activities after the failed coup. In every village, rural outpost, in every slum, the Bureau recruited paid informants to alert them to movements of arms, men, or political

⁹⁰⁷ Boutros (2009), p. 102

⁹⁰⁸ Boutros (2009), p. 122

⁹⁰⁹ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8, p. 2

⁹¹⁰ Freiha (1980), p. 52, n. 484

⁹¹¹ Beshara (2005), p. 67

allegiance.⁹¹² These clandestine activities were complemented by numerous army checkpoints across the country.

The emboldened Deuxième Bureau soon attracted the ire of key members of the political elite, including Raymond Edde. In October 1962, Edde stood before Parliament and accused the Deuxième Bureau of seeking “to build a police state in Lebanon”. According to Boutros, Edde’s address marked the moment at which Chehab began to lose his “quasi-unanimous support”, as other notable figures including Saeb Salam and Sleiman Frangieh joined Edde in his critique.⁹¹³

Even Boutros concedes that the Deuxième Bureau under Chehab went too far, and “committed abuses against the population” in its response to the abortive coup. Yet he remains steadfast that “those who accused the Chehab regime of wanting to install a police state didn’t know what they were talking about”, especially if one compared the actions of the Deuxième Bureau in the 1960s with those of the security forces in subsequent decades.⁹¹⁴ Moreover, even if the Bureau overstepped, Boutros highlights the fact that other security services under Chehab acted beyond reproach, even clashing with the Bureau on occasion.⁹¹⁵

A despatch from the UK Embassy the following year does not dismiss the ‘police state’ accusations, observing that “Behind the façade of democracy it soon becomes apparent to anyone living here that the apparently ineffective little army, as well as the police, are engaged in a ceaseless effort to keep a firm hand on the movement of political suspects”. While Lebanon did not seem to hold onto political prisoners, “the security forces do not hesitate to arrest, detain and interrogate anyone against whom there might be even a slight suspicion”.⁹¹⁶

Yet at the turn of 1964, even in this environment of heightened security, as the coup leaders were condemned to death, as the broader region was in turmoil, all anyone in Lebanon

⁹¹² Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4

⁹¹³ Boutros (2009), pp. 106-07

⁹¹⁴ Boutros (2009), p. 107

⁹¹⁵ Boutros (2009), p. 95

⁹¹⁶ Hankey to Earl of Home, 29 Jul 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/6, pp. 2-3

cared to talk about was whether or not General Chehab would stand for re-election the following summer.

1964 Presidential Campaign

From the outset, Fouad Chehab had been clear: He would not allow the Constitution to be amended so that he could serve another term. After his foiled attempt at resignation in 1960, the president was determined not to get 'trapped' again. Yet Chehab's supporters continued to press forward on the assumption that he eventually could be persuaded. The reasons for this dogged refusal to accept Chehab's word, explained the UK Ambassador, were "complex and include personal, regional, and confessional antagonisms, and the support of the Egyptian government and certain elements in the army".⁹¹⁷

In January of 1964, half a year ahead of the election, declassified Foreign Office documents indicate that both the UK and the US assessed Chehab's reluctance to renew his mandate as genuine. In addition to the President's own comments to the foreign diplomats, he had already begun making arrangements to secure posts for some of his key political supporters, such as Philippe Takla's transfer to head up the new Central Bank.⁹¹⁸ After holding the Foreign Affairs portfolio in five successive governments, Takla left for the Central Bank on 1 April 1964.⁹¹⁹

Chehab was also seriously ill for the first two months of the year. The UK Ambassador, Derek Riches, was unsure of the full catalogue of the President's ailments, but reported they included "lumbago, a slipped disc, a weakness in one of his knees and perhaps phlebitis".⁹²⁰ When Chehab returned from his long absence, still convalescing,

[He] expressed his usual contempt for Lebanese politicians and indeed for the way the Lebanese in general behave; though he recognised that confessionalism and the history of the country had made them what they were. He particularly mentioned Jumblatt, whose

⁹¹⁷ Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20

⁹¹⁸ Wright to Morris, 14 Jan 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/2

⁹¹⁹ Chancery (Beirut) to Eastern Department, 3 Apr 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/10

⁹²⁰ Riches to Morris, 17 Jan 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/3

“socialism” he derided” after he turned down a request from Jumblatt to back his electoral list in the Chouf.⁹²¹

There was also, of course, a General Election on the way, to be held over four successive Sundays in April and May. In anticipation of the vote, Lebanon’s political elite were in negotiations with their foreign patrons. Already in January, Saeb Salam had travelled to Cairo to discuss his campaign, leading to speculation that either “he is only making technical arrangements to draw the cheque, or that he is disturbed by the prospects of inadequate support and wishes to negotiate an increase”.⁹²² However, on the eve of the vote, UK intelligence suggested that Lebanese supplicants were returning from Cairo empty-handed. Foreign powers mirrored the Lebanese electorate in a general lack of enthusiasm for the polls.⁹²³

The 1964 elections turned into a referendum on Chehab’s renewal, in spite of his insistence that he would not stand. In the end, several prominent leaders who opposed the renewal lost their seats, including Camille Chamoun and Raymond Edde.⁹²⁴ These defeats, among others, were quickly and widely blamed on the *Deuxième Bureau* and the *Sûreté Général*, “and indirectly President Chehab himself, under whose regime these two agencies have built up their present undesirably powerful positions”.⁹²⁵ While some charges of army interference were exaggerated – indeed, many Chehabists also lost seats in less crucial districts – there was ample evidence to suggest that the *Deuxième Bureau* in particular had interfered both behind the scenes as well as physically at the polls.⁹²⁶ In addition to reports of bribery, rumour-mongering, intimidation, and ballot-stuffing, the Bureau was accused of buying places for some of its preferred candidates on electoral lists.⁹²⁷

While Chehab remained steadfast in his refusal to accept another presidential term, his supporters in parliament forged ahead with their plans to obtain a recommendation to

⁹²¹ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8

⁹²² Riches to Morris, 24 Jan 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/4

⁹²³ Riches to Butler, 24 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/9

⁹²⁴ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14

⁹²⁵ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14, p. 2

⁹²⁶ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14, pp. 2-3

⁹²⁷ Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4, pp. 4-5

amend the constitution by the end of May. In order for Chehab to stand for a second term, a majority of sixty-six out of the ninety-nine deputies would have to vote in favour of the amendment. The Chehabists constituted the largest bloc in the new parliament. However, their opponents were furious about the conduct of elections which removed their allies from power, and opposed Chehab's renewal.⁹²⁸ Kamel al-Assad's bloc remained undecided, and a further number of MPs had indicated that they would only vote with the Chehabists if Chehab himself agreed to stand.⁹²⁹ Their scepticism was warranted, as Chehab continued to insist he would not accept a second term "whatever the Chamber may do" and even forbade popular demonstrations in his support.⁹³⁰

Kamal Jumblatt and Rashid Karami led the Chehabist charge, but it began to look like they would not be able to secure the numbers in time. However, the Chehabists kept lobbying deputies to come over to their side – partly, at this point, with the idea of building a strong enough coalition to "secure the election in due course of a second choice".⁹³¹ At the last minute, however, the Chehabists' efforts paid off, and Assad's bloc came over to their side. On 26 May, the Chamber voted to recommend a constitutional amendment with a large majority of 79-14.⁹³²

President Chehab's response to the move was to immediately restate his staunch refusal. The cabinet, knowing that Chehab would veto the measure as soon as it came up for discussion, tried to buy time for Chehab's allies to bring him around.⁹³³ However, they could only invent so many excuses to delay. At the end of May, the cabinet conceded the point to the President, and wrote back to the parliament declining its recommendation.⁹³⁴

Under different circumstances, the matter of Chehab's re-election might now have been taken as closed. But the Chehabists were unrelenting, and they still had another constitutional avenue: If they could convince the Speaker to call an extraordinary

⁹²⁸ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14, p. 3

⁹²⁹ Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 23 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/16

⁹³⁰ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14

⁹³¹ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14

⁹³² Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 29 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/17

⁹³³ Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 29 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/17

⁹³⁴ Hankey to Goodison, 6 Jun 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/18

parliamentary session, and if they could reach the higher bar of a three-fourths majority in favour, they could override the cabinet decision and issue a *second* recommendation. This move, however, came at far greater risk: If the president again rejected the Chamber's advice, he would be forced to dissolve the current parliament and call fresh elections.

Officially, the major foreign powers were not opposed to Chehab's re-election, but they were not prepared to endorse him or any other candidate outright. Privately, figures including Nasser, Charles de Gaulle, Father Lebreton and even Pope Paul VI all urged Chehab to stay on.⁹³⁵

Chehab believed that his ardent supporters "were quite bewildered because it was the first time that they had been forced to face up to their responsibilities", and unable to comprehend the idea of a leader who did not wish to cling to power. He explained that he had been unequivocal in his refusal and given them plenty of time to find another candidate – their present state of alarm was purely the result of their own refusal to listen.⁹³⁶ Meanwhile, the more extreme among Chehab's opponents wondered if the whole affair was an elaborate ruse designed to make it impossible to elect anyone else.⁹³⁷

Through June and July, the Chehabists continued to lobby their peers to sign a petition for an extraordinary session of parliament to hold a second vote. However, faced by the prospect of triggering a new election, the deputies who had previously conditioned their votes on Chehab *accepting* to stand reverted to that position. Without their support, the Chehabists had only a bare majority, though it was clear that should the President reconsider, they could easily muster the required seventy-five.⁹³⁸

Under pressure, Speaker Kamel al-Assaad agreed to call an extraordinary session for 30 July. Two days prior to the vote, when the UK ambassador called upon Chehab,

He referred spontaneously to the approaching end of his mandate as representing a release from his "prison", after which he would be able to present at such events as the Baalbeck Festival without arousing accusations of political partiality. At the end of the call, when

⁹³⁵ Crawford to Riches, 17 Jul 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/23

⁹³⁶ Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20

⁹³⁷ Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20

⁹³⁸ Hankey to Goodison, 11 Jul 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/22

bidding the President farewell, I said that I would have hoped to see him again as President, to which he replied, immediately and firmly but with a smile, that he had taken his decision and that was that.⁹³⁹

His supporters, however, failed to get the message. The Chehabists had only been able to rally an additional three deputies to their side by the time of the extraordinary session; to avoid losing the vote, they boycotted the session they had fought so fiercely to convene in order to deny it quorum. They were hoping that Assaad would reschedule it for a later date, but after some consideration, the Speaker decided enough was enough. Instead, Assaad went ahead and called a parliamentary session for 18 August to elect a new president – the last possible date for this task, according to the rules laid out by the constitution, was 24 August.⁹⁴⁰ In light of Assaad's decision, "although the loyalists (and the Army leaders) have probably not fired their last round, the general feeling is that the campaign for the re-election of President Chehab by constitutional means is lost".⁹⁴¹

The indefatigable, increasingly desperate Chehabists continued to fight against the possibility of a new president coming into office, threatening to deny quorum to any electoral session. Fears began to mount that the Chehabists intended to prevent the election of a successor as a means to force Chehab to stay on when his mandate expired.⁹⁴² Finally, and only after Chehab's intervention, they were made to see that if they did not relent and find a new candidate, they might inadvertently pave the way for the election of an opposition president.⁹⁴³ Not everyone in their bloc was dyed-in-the-wool, and the opposition was allegedly prepared to buy off enough of these agnostic deputies to seize the majority in parliament.⁹⁴⁴ The loyalist coalition could also fracture behind different candidates, as the various Chehabist factions had their own preferences. If General Chehab absolutely would not stand, the army's preferred successor was Abdel Aziz Chehab, while most of the Chehabist politicians backed Fouad Ammoun or Jean Aziz. The press

⁹³⁹ Riches to Morris, 30 Jul 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/26

⁹⁴⁰ Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 1 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/24

⁹⁴¹ Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 1 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/24

⁹⁴² Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33

⁹⁴³ Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 14 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/29

⁹⁴⁴ Balfour-Paul to Goodison, 14 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/29

meanwhile threw in a handful of other names, including that of Charles Helou. Yet Boutros recalls that “the president... observed all of this and did not choose a side”.⁹⁴⁵

As the election approached, Boutros and Chehab met to discuss potential candidates. Chehab immediately eliminated his kinsman Abdel Aziz – keen to avoid provoking allegations of a new ‘Shihabi’ emirate – and Ammoun, whose lack of popular base left him vulnerable to pressures from Jumblatt and, more worryingly, Nasser. In the end, Chehab reasoned that the only man who could preserve Lebanon’s balance and resist pressures from the Arabists was Helou.⁹⁴⁶

Chehab encouraged the Chehabist majority to support Charles Helou as their candidate for the presidency.⁹⁴⁷ They agreed, in the end, because “no one could develop a convincing opposition” against Helou’s candidacy.⁹⁴⁸ For electoral purposes, it may not have mattered: on 18 August, the parliament convened and voted 92 to 8 to elect Charles Helou to succeed Fouad Chehab. For all the tension and theatrics of the first half of the year, power changed hands peacefully and democratically, in accordance with the Constitution and the National Pact.

Outcomes

The second phase of the Chehabist era was characterised by two trends: the institutionalisation of planning and development, and the securitisation of the state. Despite the more aggressive pursuit of reform from 1960-64, it was stymied by consociational imperatives for stability and democracy. However, the Chehabists’ objectives of national unity, modernisation, and social justice were also impeded by their own drive to empower Lebanon’s security forces.

New battle lines formed as the Chehabist bloc in parliament struggled to convince their president to renew his mandate. The contentious nature of the debate ossified existing divisions, creating an unprecedented gulf between the Chehabists and their opposition in the parliament which threatened consociational consensus.

⁹⁴⁵ Boutros (2009), p. 113

⁹⁴⁶ Boutros (2009), pp. 114-15

⁹⁴⁷ Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33

⁹⁴⁸ Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33

Consociationalism and Chehabism

The most significant and far-reaching area of tension between consociational imperatives and Chehabism rose over the issue of the presidential elections. Four years on from Chehab's attempted resignation, the country had still not found another credible presidential candidate acceptable to all sides, and all of Lebanon's segmental elite were keenly aware of the problem. For this reason, all but Chehab's staunchest opponents were prepared to support a constitutional change that would allow him to serve another term.⁹⁴⁹ When Chehab did not yield to the pressure to stay on, the Chehabists considered using the consociational system to force his hand: If they boycotted every session to elect a successor, and thus denied the sessions quorum, Chehab would face a stark choice when his mandate expired – stay on, or abandon Lebanon in the midst of a fresh, avoidable crisis.⁹⁵⁰

Helou's landslide election was also the product of elite consensus, despite Pierre Gemayel insistence on running alongside him in the interest of 'democratic principles'.⁹⁵¹ His strength as a compromise candidate, however, was vested in his weakness: "Since Dr. Helou has long nursed ambitions to the Presidency this suggests that as the compromise candidate, he has succeeded in being all things to all men and may therefore ... be unable to provide strong leadership".⁹⁵² Half a year into his mandate, the sheen was wearing off Helou in the eyes of the Chehabists, though they were not yet "openly antagonistic" towards the president. The UK ambassador asserts that "President Helou has so far been able to avoid becoming a seriously controversial figure only by a policy of flexibility verging sometimes on weakness".⁹⁵³

'Feudal' bargaining again dominated the scene ahead of general elections, albeit ironically enough often in favour of Chehab.⁹⁵⁴ Interestingly, the Lebanese public seemed to view the interference of the security forces in the general elections in a completely different (and

⁹⁴⁹ Riches to Foreign Office, 22 Jul 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/24

⁹⁵⁰ Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33

⁹⁵¹ Boutros (2009), pp. 116-17

⁹⁵² Morris to Foreign Office, 19 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/30

⁹⁵³ Morris to Foreign Office, 19 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/30

⁹⁵⁴ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14

much dimmer) light from these other forms of meddling and interference. In part, this reaction stemmed from a growing uneasiness with the role the army, and the Bureau in particular, was now playing in Lebanese politics. Although the Deuxième Bureau would reach the height of its political power under the following presidential term, the encroachment would always be associated with Chehab. Regardless of whether or not he approved of their behaviour, the soldiers assuming a more aggressive posture were all supporters of the president-general, and the link could never be fully severed.⁹⁵⁵

Lebanon's segmental elite, in business and politics, shared an interest in preserving the limited nature of Lebanon's central government and the continuation of *laissez-faire*. In order to preserve stability, these elite had to be accommodated. In terms of planning and reform, Chehabist reform could only advance as long as it served "to complement the private sector but not to enforce central controls over the economy".⁹⁵⁶

As the Chehabists moved forward on various projects aimed at modernisation and social justice, the reception accorded to these developments by the ruling and moneyed classes generally was not encouraging, but President Chehab and one or two competent civil servants seemed determined to promote their realisation. In practice the Lebanese character and the administrative deficiencies of the Government can be relied on to dilute the consistency of any planning, while these same individualistic and enterprising qualities have ensured and will continue to ensure considerable progress in a great number of useful projects without any planning at all.⁹⁵⁷

Disarmament had been a stated priority of the first phase of Chehab's presidency, although little was accomplished to that end. The consociational reasons for this failure to disarm the population seemed somewhat clearer after the abortive coup. During the security crackdown against the PPS and other conspirators, the authorities set about collecting their arms. Rather than use this as an opportunity to remove illicit weapons from the population

⁹⁵⁵ Riches to Butler, 13 May 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/14, pp. 2-3

⁹⁵⁶ Salem (1973), p. 136

⁹⁵⁷ Riches to Foreign Office, 1 Jan 1964, FO 371/175694/1011/1, p. 2

at large, the government promised to return seized weapons to anyone cleared of involvement.⁹⁵⁸

Once the authorities failed to disarm the population after the 1958 crisis, “a balance of a kind was left. Owing to the criminal folly of the P.P.S., this is now being upset”.⁹⁵⁹ In order to restore the balance, the government could not remove weapons from those against the coup, especially as the event gave them further reason to want them. This was a function of the broader obstacle to disarmament: no community would consent to forfeit its weapons if it believed other communities would retain their own. A specific, targeted campaign against the PPS was one thing, but any attempts to disarm the broader population without the strong and explicit approval of the sectarian elite was only likely to provoke fresh conflict.

The PPS characterised its plot as a way to set right the political and military situation in the country, “while putting an end to confessional feudalism and favouritism”.⁹⁶⁰ It is impossible to ignore the fact that, with the significant exception of the Fertile Crescent policy, many of the PPS’s ‘secular’ principles have some resemblance to the principles of Chehabism. While Boutros, in the government’s first press conference after the coup, completely rejected the “methods and objectives of the PPS”, he was referring specifically to the coup itself and the Fertile Crescent project.⁹⁶¹

Bassem al-Jisr argues that, although the coup did not fundamentally alter the Chehabist approach, it offered a pretext for the Deuxième Bureau to emerge from the shadows of clandestine intelligence work into overt political intervention. It was at this stage that Chehab began to lose control over the army.⁹⁶²

After the coup, the Deuxième Bureau launched a massive surveillance operation within the political class; some claim that it even attempted to intimidate the regime’s enemies

⁹⁵⁸ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 21 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/37

⁹⁵⁹ Crosthwaite to Hiller, 9 Jan 1962, FO 371/164146/1015/27

⁹⁶⁰ Deposition of Inaam Raad, *Third Indictment*, Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 38

⁹⁶¹ ‘F. Boutros révèle le plan du complot PPS’, *L’Orient*, 7 Feb 1962, p. 1, 4

⁹⁶² Jisr (2000), p. 58

through “slashing, shootings, lawsuits, and business pressures”.⁹⁶³ Jisr maintains that this securitisation of the state and the army’s intervention in political affairs never rose to the level of praetorianism.⁹⁶⁴ Still, in a sign of just how bold the army had become, the UK did not wholly discount this possibility as the end of Chehab’s mandate approached. A secret document was drawn up outlining the granted unlikely scenarios under which the army might seize power in Lebanon, either to keep Chehab in power (with or without his consent) or for sectarian political motives.⁹⁶⁵

Chehab may not have specifically approved, or in some instances even been aware of the Bureau’s intimidation tactics, but they were nonetheless an outgrowth of the ‘rational’, efficient Chehabist approach. Moreover, the elite associated the president with the army, and as the latter became more problematic in their daily lives, their support for Chehab began to wane. The consociational consensus around Chehab and his project was rapidly falling apart.

Consociational outcomes

During the second phase of Chehabism, the constitutive elements of consociationalism were substantively present. Larger cabinets than those seen in the previous phase meant the Grand Coalition was more inclusive and representative of the country’s major blocs. When Saeb Salam emerged as the strongest Sunni leader after the 1960 elections, Chehab duly appointed him Prime Minister despite a personal dislike for the man.

For the duration of this period, Lebanon enjoyed impressive continuity of government. Saeb Salam’s eight-man post-election government stood from August 1960 until October 1961, with some alterations in May 1961. The 14-man government which followed, led by Rashid Karami, lasted for 28 months until February 1964; a new record for Lebanese governments. A full half of Karami’s government, moreover, had also served at some point on Salam’s.

Yet as before, Chehab relied heavily on advice and expertise from outside the coalition, particularly where it came to development. This undermined power-sharing, and

⁹⁶³ Beshara (2005), p. 141

⁹⁶⁴ Beshara (2005), p. 142

⁹⁶⁵ Hankey to Foreign Office, 30 May 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/21

contributed to the creation of a reform program that threatened the interests of the segmental elite.

Political stability

On balance, political stability was broadly preserved from 1960-64 under President Chehab. For all the panic and disruption of early 1962, the government stayed in office and effectively preserved civil order. Indeed, once the dust had settled, the threat posed by the abortive coup may have contributed to the preservation of order:

Apart from the comfortable feeling of stability induced by the retention of the same Government and the continued presiding presence of the benevolent father figure of General Chehab, there were other and more generalised reasons for continued stability: the main one was the increasing awareness, fortified by reflections on the PPS plot, that equilibrium and tolerance must be maintained if independent Lebanon is to survive.⁹⁶⁶

The delicacy with which the state handled its prosecution of the conspirators helped regulate maintain the peace from spring 1962 onwards, among the PPS and the broader public. Firstly, they attempted to depoliticise a manifestly political act in the public discourse. Coming so soon after the events of 1958, the prosecution was at pains to distinguish the nature of the PPS's plot from that of the anti-Chamoun rebellion. After all, the rebels had not been arrested and put on trial. To make this distinction, prosecutors minimised the plotters' political motivations, and claimed they "had acted solely from a desire to seize power for their own advantage", while also emphasising the violent, criminal nature of the night's events. The defence, accordingly, attempted to prove that their clients were motivated by purely political aims.⁹⁶⁷ All sides, moreover, attempted to draw out the proceedings, so that "the heat may be allowed to go out of it".⁹⁶⁸

The state also offered concessions to the conspirators. After verdicts came down, an appeal was swiftly launched; the final ruling did not come until November 1963, by which point few were paying attention. The appeal saw a number of men's sentences reduced or

⁹⁶⁶ Riches to Foreign Office, 1 Jan 1964, FO 371/175694/1011/1, p. 2

⁹⁶⁷ Crosthwaite to Hiller, 15 Sep 1962, FO 371/164149/1015/78

⁹⁶⁸ Crosthwaite to Hiller, 15 Sep 1962, FO 371/164149/1015/78

commuted, and upheld only eight of the eleven death sentences handed down to the coup's ringleaders. Chehab would quietly pardon the men before leaving office.

Although stability was maintained during the period, it did witness a notable escalation in popular unrest over socio-economic issues. The expansion of Lebanon's road and communications networks helped accelerate urbanisation, as villagers headed to the cities to seek their fortunes. As segmental groups grew less isolated from one another, tensions rose along with grievances. As Chehab's government granted more rights to the country's workers, they became more outspoken, and strikes were commonplace. Within a few years, these issues would begin to seriously destabilise the system.

Finally, the rise of more muscular security services in the wake of the coup began to chip away at the last component of political stability: Legitimacy. The government, of course, was mindful of this threat. Boutros describes how, as justice minister in the aftermath of the coup attempt, "Right away I realised that the regime's credibility was in the hot seat. Everyone was wondering if judicial procedures would be respected and if the PPS members would benefit from due process or even if the 'national interest' would be invoked to condemn them." Boutros struggled over the months that followed to block military abuses or political interference in the justice process.⁹⁶⁹

After the President's Chief of Staff Elias Sarkis attempted to make demands of one of the investigating judges, Boutros went to Chehab, who ordered that henceforth all judicial inquiries must go through the Justice Minister, and that Boutros's word on such requests would be final. Chehab arbitrated similar disputes with military in favour of Boutros and the defence of civil liberties.⁹⁷⁰ But was this enough to counteract the sense that a security state was coalescing?

Political stability was undermined by the uncertainty of who Lebanon's president would be once Chehab's mandate ran out. Ambassador Riches saw just one, rather unlikely way that Chehab could be convinced to reconsider: "a serious deterioration of inter-confessional

⁹⁶⁹ Boutros (2009), pp. 96-97

⁹⁷⁰ Boutros (2009), p. 97-98

relations could take place and lead to a situation in which General Chehab, in his un-Lebanese but almost arrogant way, might find the call of duty imperative.”⁹⁷¹

In other circumstances, the Maronite Patriarch might have been brought in to arbitrate this kind of national dispute. But Meouchy, who was already on bad terms with Chehab, had recently alienated half the country through his reconciliation with Camille Chamoun.⁹⁷²

Democracy

In the Chehabist reaction to the abortive coup, we see a movement stymied by its own contradictions. While the security forces proceeded to crack down, the president himself refused to declare martial law or a state of emergency, in a stated desire to preserve Lebanese democracy and minimise the disruption of normal life.

Yet ‘normal life’ had already been disrupted. It would continue to be disrupted by mass arrests, deplorable conditions for detainees, and circumscribed movement for the country as a whole. The actions of the security forces and the Deuxième Bureau in particular undermined core tenets of democracy. Freedom of expression was hindered by partial censorship, and the targeting of the entire PPS arguably violated the principle of inclusive citizenship. Past and present members were instructed to make themselves known to authorities, and many people with no association whatsoever to the coup saw their civil rights and liberty curtailed. Of course, in a moment when the state itself is under threat, democratic governments all over the world often opt to use more heavy-handed tactics in neutralising the threat. Yet this is precisely why the ‘state of emergency’ exists in the first place. It may have actually been more legitimate, and in better keeping with democracy, if Chehab had declared a limited state of emergency under which the Lebanese authorities could implement their security crackdown. Instead, the government attempted a massive security clean-up while trying to maintain the fiction that their response was constitutional and compatible with ordinary democracy.

⁹⁷¹ Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20

⁹⁷² Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20

The 1964 General Elections were held on time, and mostly free and fair. Yet there was little expectation that the election would result in many new faces or perspectives. In the view of Ambassador Riches,

This does not mean that the results will be rigged or that the secrecy of the vote will be technically infringed. It is simply that feudalism is not yet extinct in Lebanon, that the practice of distributing money and the promise of future services to voters is still the accepted order, and that candidates backed by the largest funds or the best prospects of influential office still tend to attract the most votes. Moreover the confessional pattern of the Chamber is immutably fixed. Consequently, though here and there the pendulum will swing back in favour of their traditional opponents, most of the old figures will doubtless be back in their old seats; and even where new figures are successful, it will be their faces rather than their philosophies which distinguish them from those they replace.⁹⁷³

This, of course, is one of the most common democratic deficits in consociational democracies. The reason the 1960 elections saw so much change was that they were conducted under a new electoral law, and came after a rigged vote in 1957.

Chehabist outcomes

During this second Chehabist phase, significant work was made towards reform, modernisation, and rationalisation – of the country's administration, welfare regime, monetary and fiscal policy, and infrastructure. Of course, disparities persisted, and grievances only grew as those in the periphery got a better view of the centre. Yet Chehab was optimistic that, in the years that followed, his initiatives would narrow the gap between rich and poor, rural and urban.

Less progress was made towards national unity. The moments when the population felt most united was when it wanted to keep Chehab in office, at the start and again at the end of the 1960 – 1964 period. He himself was the unifying factor, and was unable to cultivate successful alternatives.

⁹⁷³ Riches to Butler, 24 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/9

National unity

While most of the work carried out over these four years was focused on modernisation and social justice, national unity was still at the heart of the Chehabist development plan. On the most basic level, aside from preserving the dignity of rural and marginalised populations, Chehabism literally connected them to the rest of the country through roads, amenities, and other infrastructure. More explicitly, Chehab's development program included measures such as the establishment of 'rural clubs', meant to encourage social and cultural activities, but also to "awaken a national consciousness".⁹⁷⁴

The Chehabists attempted to frame the failure of the coup d'état staged against them as a by-product of this growing sense of nationalism. In the bill of indictment issued against the conspirators, they wrote that,

If the plotters had been clairvoyant, they would have understood that their plot could only end in total failure, as this nation which has faced conquerors and preserved itself throughout the centuries, is today more solid than ever, and that it is in fact a strong fortification against all who plot against its entity and institutions; the Lebanese after much experience have accepted these institutions for their country and will not allow Lebanon to become an arena for conspiratorial attempts.⁹⁷⁵

Yet the Chehabist vision of domestic harmony failed to fully imbed itself in the popular consciousness. In May 1963, Patriarch Meouchy issued a statement assuring the public that Lebanon's integrity and independence were guaranteed – by national unity, but also "by the support of friendly countries that believe in freedom, justice, and human rights"; as the UK ambassador highlights, this latter notion "is out of line with President Chehab's policy of reliance on internal harmony", a fact which had not gone unnoticed by the public.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷⁴ 'Programme annuel des projets de développement pour l'année 1962', Lebanese Republic, Office of Social Development, 02 Feb 1960, Centre Lebrecht-IRFED

⁹⁷⁵ 'Third Indictment in the PPS Plot Affair', Lebanese Republic, National Information Agency, 28 May 1962, CADN 91PO/B/112, p. 20

⁹⁷⁶ Crosthwaite to Foreign Office, 8 May 1963, FO 371/170343/1015/4

Le Social/Modernisation

By the mid-1960s, the public budget was clearly expanding, which seemingly indicated “that the role of the government has been increasing drastically ... To a great extent the increase observed in the recent budgets is mainly connected with the government’s interest in promoting economic development”.⁹⁷⁷ As seen in previous chapters, Chehab’s approach to development was strongly influenced by the ideas of Father Lebret and the IRFED Mission. Development, IRFED explained, “is not simply a synonym for economic growth; it is economic growth accompanied by transformation.” This transformation needed to take place on both the economic and social planes.⁹⁷⁸

Even once a caretaker government had assumed control in order to supervise the 1964 elections, he insisted that they broaden their mandate to include socio-economic development.⁹⁷⁹

Clearly, the many development projects pursued over these four years, like the Green Plan, the Social Security plan, public housing schemes, and connecting remote villages to the national grid, were explicitly designed to help achieve modernisation and Le Social. However, many administrative reforms also served this purpose. For example, in 1961, a Development Institute was created to train the *Equipe Polyvalente*, which would later merge with National Institute of Public Administration within Civil Service Commission.⁹⁸⁰ Administrative reforms were also designed to promote equality, by rationalizing personnel decisions and instituting a semblance of meritocracy.

One of the major objectives of the administrative reform program was to define the duties and responsibilities of public positions. ... The significance of a job classification plan lies in the degree of equity that it provides in the grouping of various positions under a certain class.⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷⁷ Bashir (1965), pp. 29-31

⁹⁷⁸ ‘Propositions d’actions generals pour l’elaboration du plan – Introduction aux schemas’, Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Planning, Mission IRFED-Liban, Nov 1962, p. 3

⁹⁷⁹ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8

⁹⁸⁰ Bashir (1965), pp. 76-77

⁹⁸¹ Bashir (1965), p. 83

Yet the full realisation of the Chehabist reforms was beyond the scope of a single presidential mandate: it would take much more work to genuinely reform the administration, and it would have to derive from comprehensive study and analysis. Moreover, the project was beyond the scope of a single man in this consociational environment. Without the support of the elite or large-scale popular mobilisation in favour of reform, it could only accomplish so much:

The prestige given to the concept of planning by presidential support and the raising of development to an ideology second only to that of national unity, have led the governing class to think more and more in terms of development projects and the reforms needed to ensure implementation. If planning does not function as it should, and if a reformed bureaucracy does not live up to expectations proclaimed by the successive cabinets, then reform cannot be expected to move except at a slow pace and without revolutionary or ideological fervour. If the Ministry of General Planning does not really plan, it nevertheless shares with the za'ims the task of instituting development projects under some sort of a plan.⁹⁸²

For all Chehab had to compromise with Lebanon's elite, he was still able to pressure politicians to fall in line with his reform agenda "simply by getting angry".⁹⁸³ The task would prove still more challenging for a president who lacked Chehab's strength of conviction.

Conclusions

During the second phase of Chehab's presidency, he pursued his 'Chehabist' objectives with intensity. If he had to stay in office, then he would use that time to set in motion the socio-economic, administrative, and security reforms he envisioned for the country. Adopting a rational, scientific approach to development, he invested most of Lebanon's reserves in the expansion and modernisation of infrastructure.

⁹⁸² Riches to Foreign Office, 1 Jan 1964, FO 371/175694/1011/1, p. 2

⁹⁸³ Hudson (1988), pp. 326-27

He used consociational mechanisms with less frequency. Perhaps the clearest sign of this was his refusal to allow the constitution to be amended to keep him in office. Aside from his own desire to step down, Chehab saw himself as a strict constitutionalist and insisted on abiding by the rules.

Yet given the overwhelming consensus behind Chehab in 1964, staying on would have been compatible with Lebanon's other, unwritten constitutional document, the National Pact. There was no clear successor to Chehab – no one who could unite diverse segments of the population as he did, at a time when the country was only just cohering. The consociational imperative would have been for Chehab to stay in office, but Chehabism dictated that he go.

In the run-up to the election, Chehab lamented the “pre-1914” *mutasarrifiya* mind-set of the Maronite Patriarch, who in 1964 was still trying to dodge his taxes – over the Vatican's objections – on the grounds that patriarchs had “traditionally” not paid them. Also on the subject of taxes, he lambasted Karami's last minute about-face on raising municipal levies as the election approached.⁹⁸⁴ “Lebanon was still living in the past”, wrote the British ambassador, and would keep electing the same traditional feudal elite “because a new generation free of confessionism and jobbery had not emerged”.⁹⁸⁵

⁹⁸⁴ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8

⁹⁸⁵ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8

6. Phase Three: The Chehabist Decline

When Fouad Chehab stepped down in September 1964, it signalled the beginning of the end for his political program. The third and final Chehabist phase correlates with Charles Helou's term in office, but Chehabism largely unravelled between 1964 and the end of 1966. As such, this chapter will place its primary emphasis on those first two and a half years.

In his 1964 inaugural address to the nation, President Charles Helou vowed to continue along the path laid by his predecessor.⁹⁸⁶ However, it did not take long for the weak and consociationally-minded Helou to break with the Chehabist majority in parliament.

Meanwhile, the bitter divisions in parliament over Chehab's re-election failed to heal. The bifurcation was along ideological rather than confessional lines, which further problematised its repair and the everyday workings of the chamber. Yet the Chehabist majority was narrow and by no means unified. Over the course of the following two years, the bloc would mostly disintegrate. Kamal Jumblatt split off to lead a socialist front, as economic tensions broke through to the centre of Lebanese politics. People were angry.

Helou did attempt to continue reforms and socio-economic development, but he had different priorities – and different resources – than his predecessor. Helou was unable to find funding to sustain Chehab's development drive. Lebanon was also increasingly unable to isolate itself from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Significant pressure came to bear on Helou and his coalition from regional and domestic players alike. Chehabism had weakened key elements of Lebanon's consociational system. When an unprecedented financial crisis rocked the country in late 1966, it would devastate this unsteady structure.

In this chapter, we will examine Helou's moves and missteps from 1964 to 1966, as he struggled to manage the political class, the army, the economy, regional powers, and an aggrieved Lebanese public. Next, we take a more detailed look at the fall of Intra Bank in October 1966, a crisis from which Helou's Lebanon would be unable to recover. Finally,

⁹⁸⁶ Morris to Foreign Office, 19 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/30

we consider how Consociational and Chehabist imperatives were mutually destructive, and left Lebanon highly vulnerable at the very moment the region was set to explode.

President Helou and the political elite

Charles Helou was a former journalist at the Lebanese daily *Le Jour* and a protégé of Michel Chiha. However, he was better known for his tenure as ambassador to the Holy See in the late 1940s, and his emergence as a leading ‘independent’ political figure over the course of the decade that followed. The UK personalities report for 1959 describes him as “an intelligent and patriotic Lebanese of the Christian persuasion with a close eye on his own advancement”.⁹⁸⁷

Even as post-electoral euphoria and cautious optimism reigned in 1964, many recognised Helou as a political operative, albeit one who manoeuvred by being a “compromiser and appeaser”.⁹⁸⁸ Any illusions that Helou would proceed as a Chehabist president, however, was not to last. According to Chehab’s brother Farid and his confidant Andre Elefteriades, by the end of Helou’s first year in office Chehab had split with the new president, and come to regret his choice of successor.⁹⁸⁹ Although the divorce would become permanent only in the latter years of Helou’s presidency, Boutros locates the irreconcilable split in Helou’s decision to support Raymond Edde over the Chehabist (and Deuxième Bureau) candidate in the 1965 Jbeil by-election.⁹⁹⁰

After Helou’s election, the Chehabists clung to their grudge against the Speaker of Parliament, Kamel al-Assaad, whom they felt had betrayed them. With a narrow majority of the Chamber under their control, they swiftly unseated him in retribution, instead returning the “notoriously corrupt old hack” Sabri Hamade as speaker for the eighteenth time.⁹⁹¹ Rachid Karame and Kamal Jumblatt worked to hold the Chehabist majority bloc from splintering, but now that they had settled the score with Assaad, observers hoped that the parliamentary divide would begin to ease.⁹⁹² Instead, the parliament continued its

⁹⁸⁷ “Leading Personalities in the Lebanon”, 18 Jul 1959, FO 371/142209/1012/1, p. 9

⁹⁸⁸ Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33, p. 3

⁹⁸⁹ Freiha (1980), p. 52

⁹⁹⁰ Boutros (2009), p. 126

⁹⁹¹ Balfour Paul to Goodison, 23 Oct 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/51

⁹⁹² Riches to Morris, 14 Nov 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/54

ossification into its two opposing camps, even though the question of Chehab's renewal was long since resolved.⁹⁹³

This enduring divide made it difficult for Helou to name anyone other than Oueini, the caretaker prime minister, to lead his first government. When consultations over the distribution of portfolios stalled, Helou personally intervened, coaxing Philippe Takla back from the Central Bank to anchor the government as its foreign minister.⁹⁹⁴

When the cabinet presented itself for a vote of confidence in December 1964, the debate was dominated "by speeches criticising and supporting the regime of President Chehab and the interference of the Army in politics", which caused "a certain amount of heat" among the deputies.⁹⁹⁵ The divide between Chehabist majority and the minority remained highly salient.

The rift persisted through 1965, making it difficult to replace Oueini with a more representative prime minister and almost impossible to form parliamentary cabinets. Its endurance was fuelled by discontent over the role of the *Deuxième Bureau*, as "the minority is profoundly opposed to the vestiges of the Chehab regime which it detects in the inclination of the army to intervene when it wishes".⁹⁹⁶

The *Deuxième Bureau* and President Helou

The transition to a new president had done little to discourage the *Deuxième Bureau*'s rise. Indeed, the role of the army in politics continued to occupy the minds of the elite and the public alike, who were concerned over an apparent "dualism of power" in Lebanon.⁹⁹⁷ The question of the army's involvement in politics, however, was not totally straightforward. In the eyes of many, including most Chehabists, they were a stabilising force:

Sharing [Chehab's] contempt for politicians and genuinely impressed by the dangers which seemed still to threaten Lebanon as an independent country, they regarded

⁹⁹³ Riches to Morris, 18 Nov 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/54

⁹⁹⁴ Covering note, Riches to Morris, 23 Nov 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/56

⁹⁹⁵ Riches to Morris, 11 Dec 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/58

⁹⁹⁶ Hankey to Foreign Office, 24 Jul 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/11

⁹⁹⁷ Riches to Walker, 1 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

themselves, probably with some justice, as the mainstay of internal stability as well as being responsible for the security of the state...⁹⁹⁸

After 1965, this “duality of civil and military powers reached its paroxysm”, only declining after the 1968 elections.⁹⁹⁹ Initially, Helou was accused of granting too much government power to Deuxième Bureau, as critics saw the Bureau calling the shots behind scene. Despite denials from Helou and Oueini, the UK ambassador’s “other contacts” confirmed his suspicions that the army was behind Oueini’s abrupt resignation as prime minister in the summer of 1965. Their involvement was presumed to be inspired by “their intense dissatisfaction with the behaviour of the Minister of the Interior, Takieddin Solh, who among other things took measure to ensure a moderately fair poll in the Jbeil by-election”.¹⁰⁰⁰

The country watched the 1965 Jbeil by-election with particular interest as a means to gauge the balance of power between Helou and the Bureau.¹⁰⁰¹ Helou actively supported Raymond Edde, who had lost the seat in 1964 due to the Bureau’s interference. Edde, who was the favourite, won by just 932 votes out of 20,020 cast, in vote marred “by unrest and violence unusual even for the Lebanon”.¹⁰⁰² The outcome, in terms of what it said about Helou and Bureau, was inconclusive.

Helou did make moves to reduce the army’s influence in politics. He replaced the military heads of General Security and the Internal Security Forces with civilians, bringing them back under proper ministerial control.¹⁰⁰³ Relations between Helou and the Army were marked by a “veiled hostility” that all too often came out in the open.¹⁰⁰⁴ In another instance, a judicial inquiry found that the Gaby Lahoud and Deuxième Bureau had been interfering the appointment of ministers for a new cabinet, “paralysing the prerogatives of

⁹⁹⁸ Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4, p. 6

⁹⁹⁹ Freiha (1980), p. 53

¹⁰⁰⁰ Riches to Morris, 16 Oct 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/24

¹⁰⁰¹ Riches to Morris, 25 Jun 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/7

¹⁰⁰² Hankey to Morris, 17 Jul 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/8

¹⁰⁰³ Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4, p. 7

¹⁰⁰⁴ Riches to Stewart, 14 May 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/4, p. 6

legal power”.¹⁰⁰⁵ By the end of the 1960s, the army’s role in politics was arguably the most contentious issue in Lebanese politics.

Helou’s approach to reform: L’Épuration

When Elie Salem tried to make sense of why development planning fell off so precipitously after Chehab’s departure, he noted that Helou “lacked Shihab’s enthusiasm for planning and did not give the Ministry the support needed to improve its performance”.¹⁰⁰⁶ Another more practical issue was, of course, a lack of funds. Chehab had exhausted the state’s reserves, which meant that Helou would need to find a new source of funding if he were to continue the reforms at anything approaching a similar pace. Foreign loans and increased taxation were both floated as possible solutions, though neither seemed particularly realistic.¹⁰⁰⁷

Helou’s own reform agenda centred on a major administrative purge, or *épuration*, of corrupt officials within the judiciary, diplomatic core, and civil service. Two laws to this effect were passed in the summer of 1965, and the actual ‘purges’ took place from December through the early months of 1966.¹⁰⁰⁸ In January of that year, Helou addressed the nation at some length on development, reform, and the cost of living. The *épuration*, he explained, was just the first phase of reform – a means to ensure the second, longer phase could proceed efficiently and correctly.¹⁰⁰⁹ Despite his reassurances to Chehab, Helou quickly shelved IRFED’s five-year plan, and commissioned a new plan from the Planning and Development Council. Many Lebanese experts had resented IRFED’s appointment, and were quick to direct the new plan in a more liberal direction.¹⁰¹⁰

The *épuration* was at once both narrower in scope and more dramatic in presentation than many would have liked:

¹⁰⁰⁵ Freiha (1980), p. 54

¹⁰⁰⁶ Salem (1973), p. 136

¹⁰⁰⁷ Riches to Morris, 21 Jan 1966, FO 371/186627/1015/5

¹⁰⁰⁸ Riches to Stewart, 1 Jan 1966, FO 371/180766/1011/3

¹⁰⁰⁹ Helou, 19 Jan 1966, *Message to the Nation*, National Information Agency No. 1089, Archives Lebreton-IRFED

¹⁰¹⁰ Verdeil (2009), pp. 157-158

The President told me on 22 February that he knew he had been criticised for excessive caution in his programme of reform; but he had had no alternative. He had lacked the means with which the previous regime had been able to keep agitation quiet and he had been obliged to use what he called “the sister of charity” approach rather than play the butcher.¹⁰¹¹

In part, Helou’s governments – compromised, as they were, by the parliamentary divide – were simply not strong enough to push through major legislation. When Helou informed the government of his intention to purge the administration of its corrupted elements, Minister of Information Najib Alamuddin saw the task as a “courageous, stupendous undertaking”, if perhaps overly ambitious for their government.¹⁰¹²

The other major criticism of the *épuration* was that it denied its targets any right to know or challenge the grounds for their dismissal. Alamuddin’s enthusiasm waned as he watched the relevant legislation be rushed through parliament, but “the most serious misgivings began to plague me when special committees set up to purify the administration recommended the dismissal of a number of senior judges, ambassadors and a few senior civil servants” without providing any rationale.¹⁰¹³ The targeted judges had been “ruthlessly” and unjustifiably deprived of their right to due process, and to know and respond to the charges levelled against them. Indeed, the reform legislation dictated the government itself not know the nature of the charges, but must “approve the recommendations with no questions asked.”¹⁰¹⁴ Alamuddin and several other ministers raised concerns about the *épuration* to little avail:

It became clear that the proposed dismissals had nothing to do with the reforms we had so fervently supported. The new laws had been designed and exploited by unscrupulous men in power to take revenge on senior Lebanese personalities who had at some time in some way offended them. It was not reform but personal vendetta.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹¹ Riches to Morris, 5 Mar 1966, FO 371/186627/1015/8

¹⁰¹² Alamuddin (1987), pp. 123-24

¹⁰¹³ Alamuddin (1987), p. 124

¹⁰¹⁴ Alamuddin (1987), p. 125

¹⁰¹⁵ Alamuddin (1987), p. 125

The government ultimately bowed to pressure to approve the full list of dismissals.¹⁰¹⁶ Alamuddin, along with the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, resigned in protest at what they viewed as a ‘criminal’ abuse of power.¹⁰¹⁷ They were later convinced to return to the cabinet through insinuations (which proved to be false) that they would be able to correct these abuses.¹⁰¹⁸ In time, Alamuddin would come to believe that the Purge “was really designed to intimidate senior judges, top government executives and even politicians into submitting to plots that were then being prepared against Lebanon”.¹⁰¹⁹

The UK, on the other hand, viewed the *épuration* as fairly successful, even if they were sceptical of its potential for long term impact. In particular, they were impressed by the boldness demonstrated by Helou in leading the charge.¹⁰²⁰ When he felt like it, the new president was capable of exerting some strength.

Helou’s central message was reform would be achieved slowly, in contrast to the plans of profligate former governments.¹⁰²¹

The rise of socio-economic discontent

As Helou entered office, Lebanon’s economic situation stagnated amidst an atmosphere of “financial unease”.¹⁰²² In 1964, Lebanon saw its first budget deficits, as a result of the Chehabist development drive over the past few years. The relatively stable cost of living in the country steadily ticked upward, as the population itself also expanded.¹⁰²³ While the economy remained strong in the mid-1960s, Riches warned, “any economy resting on such an overwhelming proportion of invisible revenue and capital flows, must inevitably be

¹⁰¹⁶ Riches to Morris, 18 Dec 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/28, -/29

¹⁰¹⁷ Alamuddin (1987), pp. 125-26

¹⁰¹⁸ Alamuddin (1987), p. 125; Riches to Morris, 22 Dec 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/29

¹⁰¹⁹ Alamuddin (1987), p. 126

¹⁰²⁰ Riches to Stewart, 29 Mar 1966, FO 371/186627/1015/13

¹⁰²¹ Helou, 19 Jan 1966, *Message to the Nation*, National Information Agency No. 1089, Archives Lebret-IRFED

¹⁰²² Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20, p. 3

¹⁰²³ Riches to Stewart, ‘Lebanon: Economic and Financial Outlook’, 5 Mar 1965, FO 371/180775/1102/1

vulnerable and inflationary tendencies at home and political threats both at home and abroad are not conducive to the maintenance of long-term confidence”.¹⁰²⁴

Helou’s job was complicated by growing labour unrest. By the close of 1964, his first government was “faced less by political than social and economic problems” emerging from a mass teachers’ strike “and a general labour malaise stemming from the increase in the cost of living”.¹⁰²⁵ The government’s intention to address these issues by raising the minimum wage met stern opposition from Lebanon’s commercial elite, who saw their profit margins threatened. Raising taxes for the wealthy – who were already skilled at evasion – was a non-starter.

In late September, Kamal Jumblatt led a demonstration in solidarity with Lebanon’s apple growers, bringing together a diverse array of left-wing forces as well as his own base. He used the occasion to speak damningly about Lebanon’s economic system. The rally provoked a frenzy in the Lebanese press. For weeks, the question of the free market dominated the front pages as well as popular discussion.¹⁰²⁶ While many of the leading papers vehemently opposed Jumblatt’s socialist proposals, by engaging in the debate both sides had to address to the issue of socio-economic reforms and development. The failures of the Helou regime to make significant advances in these areas came into sharp relief.

The papers moved on from the economic debate when, for the first time since the 1949 armistice agreement, the Israelis staged raids into Lebanese territories in pursuit of Palestinian rebels. As Lebanon was increasingly implicated in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jumblatt’s Pan-Arab credentials and good relations with the Palestinians fortified his position as champion of the left.

Although Jumblatt’s left-wing alliance was initially dismissed by the British, by the end of 1965 they were watching it coalesce with some concern: “This is having its effect, for example, in the manoeuvrings within the trade unions and of course ties in with the growing

¹⁰²⁴ Riches to Stewart, ‘Lebanon: Economic and Financial Outlook’, 5 Mar 1965, FO 371/180775/1102/1

¹⁰²⁵ Riches to Morris, 11 Dec 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/58

¹⁰²⁶ See *Revue de la Presse Libanaise Arabe*, 28 Sep – 26 Oct 1965 (Nos. 180-199), Ambassade de France, Service de Presse, CADN 91PO/D

resentment at the lack of any real progress in the field of social reform”.¹⁰²⁷ By the autumn, Jumblatt’s pro-socialism demonstrations were large enough “to excite counter-polemics” from Pierre Gemayel, who began holding opposing rallies in support of free enterprise. The developments were read as “an indication of a basically genuine feeling, namely, that unrestricted free enterprise in the Lebanon has failed to provide either a sufficiency for every citizen or the range of welfare services normal in a civilised state”.¹⁰²⁸

“Any attempt in the Lebanon to unite social classes behind ideas or policies”, warned the British ambassador in 1965, “comes up sooner or later against confessionalism”.¹⁰²⁹ As many in the country clamoured for social justice, Helou faced renewed pressure from the country’s economic elite to *ease* socio-economic reforms, who believed that Lebanon’s prosperity “must always be coupled with an entirely free economic system” and worried that a reform agenda would leave the weaker new president susceptible to Arab socialist pressures.¹⁰³⁰

The summer of 1966 was marked by ever more intense industrial action, as everyone from bakers to dock workers and primary teachers went on strike. While strikes were nothing new, the latest were far better organised. Jumblatt, although now in the cabinet, was offering support to many of the strikers, and the Prime Minister Abdallah Yafi had a free hand to negotiate terms. Yet as soon as one dispute was resolved, two more seemed to rise up in its place. Discontent around the cost of living and the glacial pace of socio-economic development had reached a fever pitch.

The collapse of Intra Bank

Fouad Boutros recalls how, in 1966, three significant events struck Lebanon in quick succession: the murder of anti-Nasserist journalist Kamel Mroue on 16 May, the first confrontation between the Lebanese army and Palestinian commandos the following month

¹⁰²⁷ Hankey to Goodison, 25 Sep 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/20

¹⁰²⁸ Riches to Morris, 16 Oct 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/24

¹⁰²⁹ Riches to Morris, 21 Dec 1965, FO 371/186627/1015/1

¹⁰³⁰ Annual Report on Labour and Social Issues, 1965, LAB 13/1940/40, p. 3

on 22 June, and the failure of Intra Bank four months later on 14 October,¹⁰³¹ an event “which imperilled Lebanon’s position as banker to the Middle East”.¹⁰³² As the largest financial institution in the Middle East, Intra Bank’s dramatic fall in late 1966 irreparably harmed Lebanon’s economy and its credibility as the region’s banking capital.

On the one hand, there was certainly mismanagement and corruption at Intra. The IRFED report had warned of the dangers of these kind of financial practices in the starkest terms. On the other, the crisis itself was clearly manufactured – an expression of xenophobia, parochialism, and spite. Chehab openly detested the sectarian elite and politicians for just this kind of behavior, and he had tried to make it harder for them via marginalisation and reform. The Intra crisis was an embodiment, thus, of so much of what Chehabism opposed. But it was also, indirectly, its product.

On 14 October 1966, Intra Bank (short for ‘International Traders’) suddenly stopped payments. Initially, the Central Bank indicated that it would provide funds in order to guarantee Intra Bank’s liquidity, and allow the bank to reopen. As the run on Intra spread to other local banks, the government held an emergency meeting to stave off catastrophe. They declared a three-day bank holiday, and asked the Central Bank to assist all Lebanese banks in staying afloat. However, on spurious grounds, the government decreed that one bank would be excluded from this measure – Intra.

MEA Chairman and former Information Minister Najib Alamuddin, who was also on the Intra board at the time, suggests in his memoirs that the Prime Minister, Abdallah Yafi – a known enemy of Intra and its chairman, Youssef Beidas – intentionally deceived his government in order to secure Intra’s exclusion.¹⁰³³ Whether through conspiracy or incompetence, errors in Intra’s subsequent audit led to a gross misrepresentation of the bank’s solvency that no one in government seemed interested in correcting.¹⁰³⁴ Indeed,

¹⁰³¹ Boutros (2009), p. 131

¹⁰³² King to Brown, 1 Jan 1968, FCO 17/312/EL1/2

¹⁰³³ Alamuddin (1987), pp. 147-48

¹⁰³⁴ Alamuddin (1987), p. 149

according to the daily *An-Nahar* newspaper at the time, “The intention was to bankrupt the bank despite the fact that it was solvent”.¹⁰³⁵

While the Intra crisis immediately drew attention, it was not until 18 October that the affair began to dominate the Lebanese press coverage.¹⁰³⁶ Across the political spectrum, heavy blame was laid upon the Lebanese authorities and the Central Bank in particular for their failure to prevent the crisis. *Ash-Shams* already used its editorial to blame the government for allowing ‘foreigners’ to assume such a large stake in Lebanon’s economy.¹⁰³⁷ Several papers argued that Lebanon’s failure to preserve its inter-Arab neutrality had also helped provoke the crisis, driving Gulf Arabs to withdraw their deposits from Intra. Arab shareholding in Intra in 1966 was no higher than 20.32% -- yet an exaggeration of Arab control fueled opposition to the bank’s activities.¹⁰³⁸

Ad-Diyar reported on a phone call between former President Chehab and Helou. Chehab warned that the far left would reap the rewards of any major financial crisis, and urged his successor to find a ‘positive solution to the question of liquidity’.¹⁰³⁹ Indeed, with the region split between the revolutionaries and the traditionalists, many on the left seized upon Intra’s downfall as firm evidence that capitalism could not work in an Arab context. The Intra affair was also “an unpleasant reminder of the corruption which seems to be endemic in Lebanese affairs”, with as many as two-thirds of the parliament recipients of Intra ‘loans’.¹⁰⁴⁰

If the establishment of a Central Bank had initially worried Lebanon’s economic elite, fears of government intervention were put to rest with the Central Bank’s “aloof” response to the Intra crisis.¹⁰⁴¹ The Central Bank was not prepared to bail out Intra, but surely someone else would. Intra counted Lebanese emigrés, wealthy Arabs, and the Kuwaiti and Qatari

¹⁰³⁵ Alamuddin (1987), p. 155

¹⁰³⁶ Ambassade de France, ‘*Revue de la Presse Libanaise Arabe*’, Nos. 196, 197, 198, 15-18 Oct 1966

¹⁰³⁷ Ambassade de France, ‘*Revue de la Presse Libanaise Arabe*’, No. 198, 18 Oct 1966

¹⁰³⁸ Alamuddin (1987), pp. 141-42

¹⁰³⁹ Ambassade de France, ‘*Revue de la Presse Libanaise Arabe*’, No. 198, 18 Oct 1966

¹⁰⁴⁰ King to Brown, 1 Jan 1968, FCO 17/312/EL1/2

¹⁰⁴¹ Hudson (1988), p. 323

governments among its clients.¹⁰⁴² In the weeks following the crash, it was reasonably expected that the Arabs might thus show some interest in rescuing Intra.¹⁰⁴³ Yet the authorities continued to thwart attempts to save the bank in late 1966 and early 1967. When Kuwait signed a loan agreement in late 1966, it faced sharp criticism. Kuwait swiftly cancelled the agreement just one month later, on the pretext that Lebanon's Commercial Court had failed to authorise it.¹⁰⁴⁴ The Lebanese government eventually passed revised banking legislation in response to the crisis, but

The resultant law, product of the noteworthy *immobilisme* which has enabled Lebanon to survive politically, revealed that the scope and nature of the economic problem was not understood and that faction interests still reigned. ... The Government failed to exploit the crisis momentum, and the economy was free to drift further.¹⁰⁴⁵

The plot against Intra

Intra Bank was founded in Beirut 1951 by a naturalised Palestinian Christian, the charismatic and impulsive Youssef Beidas. By 1966, Intra had grown to become Lebanon's largest bank, with branches in every global financial capital and an eye watering portfolio of assets.

It is not for nothing that Lebanon is called the Switzerland of the Middle East. Its wide-open banking laws, the result of how much baksheesh on Allah could guess, have made it a haven of cash for anybody with a balance to hide – U.S. tax evaders, oil-rich sheiks who want to lay something by for the rainy day of revolution, and assorted racketeers and purveyors of stolen or smuggled wealth from all over the world. "Beirut," said Bedas, with a sigh of nostalgia, "was a green oasis of free enterprise."

To foreign depositors, Bedas' own patch of oasis was the greenest garden of all.¹⁰⁴⁶

From his early days as a Beirut money-changer, Beidas's success was driven by the man's embrace of risky ventures where a profit could be made. Among his notable achievements

¹⁰⁴² King to Brown, 1 Jan 1968, FCO 17/312/EL1/2

¹⁰⁴³ Riches to Brown, 1 Jan 1967, FCO 17/312/EL1/2/1

¹⁰⁴⁴ Financial Times, 'Kuwait cancels £6M. Intra Bank Loan', 1 Jan 1966

¹⁰⁴⁵ 'No End to the Affair', 14 Sep 1967, *The Times* (London), p. 23

¹⁰⁴⁶ De Carvalho (1967), p. 87

was the transformation of Lebanon's struggling flagship carrier, Middle East Airlines: just a few years after Beidas's acquisition, MEA had become one of the world's most profitable airlines. However, even as so many of Beidas's gambles seemed to pay off, they left him with highly illiquid assets.

Intra Bank's success and impressive portfolio could have been a source of national pride. Instead it provoked resentment among the Consortium's power brokers: over time, Intra had come to be "the supreme symbol of the Palestinian bourgeoisie to Lebanese national life".¹⁰⁴⁷ To many observers, Intra's sudden reversal of fortunes in October 1966 looked suspicious:

The success of Intra Bank aroused the envy and hostility of the older-established Lebanese political and financial bourgeoisie, who were alarmed by its growing power. In October 1966, a conspiracy which appears to have involved the whole of the traditional Lebanese establishment brought about the sudden collapse of Intra. A carefully engineered run on the bank forced the Intra management to appeal for help to the central Bank of Lebanon, which refused to come to the rescue, although the assets of the Intra Bank at the moment were known to be far in excess of its liabilities.¹⁰⁴⁸

As an Intra Board member, a personal friend of both Beidas and Helou, Alamuddin's memoir offers particular insight into how the crisis unfolded.

In October 1966, President Helou called Alamuddin to ask him about Intra's financial troubles. Alamuddin replied that the President had been misinformed – the Bank was in the process of expansion, and had recently taken on a number of strong investments. In response, Helou confided that Beidas had recently come to him for help securing an urgent substantial loan from the Central Bank. Alamuddin, needless to say, was baffled. When he managed to finally get a hold of Beidas, who was in the US for a World Bank meeting, the Intra chairman gave a very different account: According to Beidas, Helou had come to him, and requested that Intra increase investments in Lebanon. When Beidas politely declined,

¹⁰⁴⁷ Salibi (1976), p. 29

¹⁰⁴⁸ Salibi (1976), pp. 29-30

Helou pushed the matter, and encouraged chairman to use the bank's existing Lebanese investments as collateral for a loan from the Central Bank. Beidas agreed to meet with Helou's brother in law, a Central Bank official, to discuss the matter further.¹⁰⁴⁹ He had not informed the Intra board of the meeting yet because he saw no rush to bring up such a mundane affair while he was travelling. Alamuddin writes,

He then remarked angrily: 'You know me and my love for Intra. Would I have left Beirut to attend a routine World Bank meeting had I felt the least suspicion that my bank was in trouble? And had I wanted assistance from Charles Helou, would I not have asked for your help to get it?'¹⁰⁵⁰

Upon hearing about Helou's call to Alamuddin, Beidas was "convinced that the President's story would spark off a run on the bank", and he asked his friend to intercede as soon as possible. Alamuddin was also abroad, but he immediately flew back to Beirut. However, by the time his plane touched down, there had been "a rapid deterioration in the situation. News was spreading like wildfire that Intra was in trouble and depositors were withdrawing their money", including those banks among Intra's clients. However, panic had not yet advanced to terror, as Alamuddin was briefed on Intra's substantial assets which could be used as collateral for government assistance.

Upon arriving to meet Helou, Alamuddin "argued for immediate help from the Central Bank to avoid the biggest financial catastrophe in the history of Lebanon and the destructive blow to the economy that must inevitably follow".¹⁰⁵¹ But Helou and the Prime Minister, Abdullah Yafi, insisted to Alamuddin that Beidas was crooked and Intra was beyond saving. Yafi explained that he had received a report detailing this sorry state, which rang false to Alamuddin. When Alamuddin demanded to see the report himself, Yafi replied that the report "has been sent to me confidentially. I can neither let you see it nor disclose the name of its author".¹⁰⁵²

¹⁰⁴⁹ Alamuddin (1987), pp. 135-36

¹⁰⁵⁰ Alamuddin (1987), p. 137

¹⁰⁵¹ Alamuddin (1987), pp. 137-38

¹⁰⁵² Alamuddin (1987), p. 138

Boutros rejects the charges that government allowed Intra to fail.¹⁰⁵³ Yet it became clear over the following hours and days that not only the President and Prime Minister but many other members of the political elite had no interest in saving the bank nor in defending Youssef Beidas. Even so, Alamuddin and his allies did not truly believe that Lebanon would allow its largest bank to fail.

“How could a bank, even the biggest, ward off a run if the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister spread the news that it was in financial difficulties and that it had applied for government assistance which they were convinced should not be given?”¹⁰⁵⁴ This executive assault, contended Alamuddin, was then bolstered by an on the ground campaign of letters, calls, and door to door canvassing imploring ordinary Lebanese to withdraw their deposits from Intra “before it was too late”.¹⁰⁵⁵

Furthermore, even as Arab participation was held up as a boogeyman, Beidas believed that much of the animus actually derived from his efforts to boost Lebanese control of the economy: “My associates and I initiated the Lebanonisation plan in the full knowledge that in so doing we were challenging, not only powerful foreign interests, but also a small but highly influential group of Lebanese.”¹⁰⁵⁶ Alamuddin suggests, in fact, that foreign investors – specifically the French – encouraged their allies in the Lebanese elite to initiate a brutal propaganda campaign against Beidas and Intra.¹⁰⁵⁷

The preponderance of evidence suggests that the Intra crisis was the result of an orchestrated campaign against the bank and its chairman. It is irrefutable, however, that such a campaign gathered momentum once the crisis was underway, and prevented Intra from being saved by local or foreign actors. The collateral damage, however, was heavy. Not only did other local banks suffer, and sources of investment dry up, the Lebanese economy as a whole was damaged, and confidence in Lebanon’s banking industry fell

¹⁰⁵³ Boutros (2009), p. 132

¹⁰⁵⁴ Alamuddin (1987), p. 139

¹⁰⁵⁵ Alamuddin (1987), p. 146

¹⁰⁵⁶ Alamuddin (1987), pp. 142-43

¹⁰⁵⁷ Alamuddin (1987), p. 143

precipitously. Even among Intra's foes, the government and Central Bank came in for harsh criticism for their handling of the affair – and their failure to prevent it.

All this damage was then consolidated in June 1967 by the regional instability expressed in the six-day war, and Lebanon never recovered its position as the region's banker. Lebanon could not afford to pursue the development projects it so desperately needed, and socio-economic inequalities expanded. The communal mistrust exemplified by the Intra affair deepened these widening gaps among Lebanon's population. On both ideological and material planes, the government and population alike were visibly worse off.

The Fall of Chehabism

The Intra affair cast a long shadow over 1967. It was in this gloomy climate that, in June, regional tensions exploded in an Arab-Israeli war. While Lebanon played no offensive role in the conflict, it took a heavy economic, political, and psychic toll on the country: "If the Intra Bank crash was the fault of the Lebanon, the June war was a reminder of the extent to which their prosperity depends on factors outside their control".¹⁰⁵⁸

As banking confidence plummeted, trade also began to stagnate. Meanwhile, costs of living continued to rise without a commensurate adjustment in incomes, raising popular frustration over the country's wealth gap.¹⁰⁵⁹ For many of the marginalised, Jumblatt's socialist ideas appealed despite the man's erraticism and bombast; his movement was bolstered, moreover, by its pro-Palestinian credentials in an era when Israel had begun to strike out against Lebanon. For the first time, an opposition began to coalesce around explicitly class-based Leftist ideology in addition to sectarian concerns.

Ahead of the 1968 parliamentary elections, Chamoun, Edde, and Gemayel brought their respective parties together in a Tripartite alliance or *Hilf*, with the support of Patriarch Meouchy. The alliance's central message was that the Palestinian commando movement constituted a kind of Trojan Horse for radical incursion into Lebanon's traditional system.¹⁰⁶⁰ The message resonated with many Christian voters. Although the new

¹⁰⁵⁸ King to Brown, 1 Jan 1968, FCO 17/312/EL1/2

¹⁰⁵⁹ Riches to Brown, 1 Jan 1967, FCO 17/312/EL1/2/1, p. 2

¹⁰⁶⁰ Salibi (1976), p. 35

parliament was split down the middle, the moral victory went to the Tripartite *Hilf*, which unseated key Chehabists.

If it had been difficult to form a government out of the 1964 parliament, doing from the 1968 parliament was all but impossible. The impasse caused Helou to briefly resign, though the act excited little in the way of public passions. He withdrew the resignation when a distasteful solution was found in a ‘government of four’ – the same compromise as a decade prior, and with almost the same line-up: the ministers were Oueini, Gemayel, and Edde, but with Yafi (rather than Karami) as Premier.¹⁰⁶¹

According to Freiha, the decision to give the *Hilf* half of the cabinet – and to keep the Chehabists out – was an attempt by Helou to counterbalance the influence of the Deuxième Bureau.¹⁰⁶² After the 1968 elections, “the Christian sector of the *Nahj* began to show more concern with the commando movement, and the Shihabist Army command and Deuxième Bureau in particular began to take more energetic measures to restrict commando activities in the refugee camps”.¹⁰⁶³

The pressure only continued to escalate. Toward the end of Helou’s term, some began to believe the only way to exit the mounting tension was for Chehab to stand again as president. The constitutional barriers he was so loath to violate, after all, only applied to *consecutive* presidential terms. This, naturally, provoked angry reactions from the *Hilf*. Chehab mulled the proposition seriously enough that when he finally decided not to run in August 1970, he issued a public statement explaining his reasons. The statement is reproduced here in full:

In response to the pressures I have been subject to, to make me stand as a candidate to the first office, I have deemed it my duty, before taking any final decision, to proceed to an in depth study of the elements of the conjuncture and of their implications in every field. I undertook this task, to assess the possibilities that would be presented to me in order to serve my country, according to my personal conception of that duty and of the imperatives of the future.

¹⁰⁶¹ Cable to FCO, 21 Oct 1968, FCO 17/832/EL1/1/3

¹⁰⁶² Freiha (1980), p. 55

¹⁰⁶³ Salibi (1976), p. 38

Based on the experience I have acquired during the exercise of my various duties, notably as the Head of State; taking into account the political, economical and social evolutions; drawing inspiration from my personal conception of authority and of the role of the State, as well as from the prestige that must be attached to it; and conforming to my method of work and to what the Lebanese would expect from a man who has the experience of government, I believe that the situation is as follows:

The Lebanese political institutions and the traditional customs of public life do not appear to constitute a tool suited to the imperatives of the Lebanese recovery as required by the new decade in all fields. Our political institutions are, in many respects, lagging behind the modern political regimes that try to ensure the efficiency of the State.

Our electoral laws are based on temporary and provisional elements. As to our economical regime, the defects in its application favour the development of situations of monopoly. All this leaves little room for a project of a national level.

The ambition of such an endeavour is the establishment of an authentic, lasting parliamentary democracy, the suppression of monopolies, the guaranty of a dignified life and a better existence for the Lebanese, within the framework of a truly liberal economy where jobs and equal opportunities are ensured, and where all can benefit from the positive elements of a true economical and social democracy.

But the many contacts that I established and the analysis that I made have confirmed my conviction that the country is not yet ready to accept these fundamental solutions, that I would only consider within the respect of legality and of the fundamental freedoms to which I have always been attached.

This is why I have decided not to be a candidate to the Presidency of the Republic. By rendering this decision public, I thank the Members of Parliament, the politicians, the authorities, and the citizens who have granted me their trust. I wish them to succeed in the service of Lebanon.¹⁰⁶⁴

¹⁰⁶⁴ Fouad Chehab, Public address, 4 Aug 1970. Translation from the Arabic by *Fondation Fouad Chehab*

Outcomes

Chehabism's final phase was characterised by several trends: the irreconcilable parliamentary divide, the role of the army in politics, and rising regional tensions which Lebanon could not escape. Unrest was aggravated by the re-emergence of consociational practices which had been somewhat muzzled by Chehab's steady, unifying presence. Perhaps most significantly, the period saw rising socio-economic discontent.

At the turn of 1965, "Behind the façade of prosperity the social and economic progress of an important minority of the population faltered".¹⁰⁶⁵ Chehabism had raised expectations to a level Helou simply could not reach, and grievance inevitably rose. Chehabism's socialist leanings and its focus on socio-economic inequality had also helped foment a culture where people felt entitled to basic services like housing, health, and education. After years of what they perceived as broken promises by politicians, the lower-middle class "might be turning away from the traditional political leaders to the trade unions in the hope of bettering their general social conditions".¹⁰⁶⁶

In contrast to other consociational democratic systems, Lebanon explicitly defines its segments and their representation in its constitutional documents. This is a strength, as long as the status quo remains intact, but it makes it difficult to accommodate changes. This is notably an issue in terms of proportional representation. It also becomes a problem when new issues cleave the population along different lines.

At the start of the Chehabist era in 1958, the two opposing camps broadly correlated with the fundamental segments – the loyalists were mostly Christian and the opposition mostly Muslim. This meant that both issues could be accounted for simultaneously in government formation and other negotiating spaces. In 1964, by the time of the third era, the sharp division between Chehabists and anti-Chehabists cut across sectarian lines. This state of affairs was highly disruptive to normal consociational political order and decisionmaking. By the end of the Chehabist era in 1970, there were four kinds of salient political cleavage

¹⁰⁶⁵ Riches to Walker, 1 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

¹⁰⁶⁶ Morris (Labour Attaché) in discussion with Daher Zeidan, 3 Aug 1966, Labour Reports, LAB 13/1940/63

in Lebanon: in addition to the confessional divisions, people were divided by their position on the army (and its role in politics), their economic leanings (in favour of social justice or conservatism), and the issue of how free a hand to give the Palestinian commandos in Lebanon.¹⁰⁶⁷

Lebanon's government could not truly crack down on labour unrest – and risk its democracy – nor could it intervene in the economy to create fairer conditions and risk its elite cooperation. The consociational democratic system was fundamentally incompatible with Chehabist social justice, and the battles looked increasingly like a zero-sum game.

Chehabism and consociationalism also clashed where it came to the role of the army in politics. Under Helou, much was made of the apparent 'duality of power' in the country. The UK ambassador, echoing the Chehabists, suggests that such 'dualism' may on balance be a force for good in Lebanon:

The Lebanese are a nation of individualists, the only coherent and semi-disciplined forces in civil life being (apart from association of bankers and industrialists) confessional groups. The army does form a disciplined element and it is an advantage to the country that this comparatively solid island should maintain a position in a sea of conflicting currents.¹⁰⁶⁸

To most of Lebanon's traditional sectarian elite, however, this was an unacceptable encroachment. They surely resented giving up some of their power and privileges, but many also felt that the army's intervention was a threat to democracy in Lebanon. In a consociational system, they were not wrong.

The Deuxième Bureau was at the centre of the intractable parliamentary divide during Helou's tenure. In the parliament, the Chehabists and their consociational opponents refused to cooperate, making it impossible to form a Grand Coalition with any real authority. Without that forum and its traditional checks and balances, little could be done to mollify the public and catastrophes like the Intra Bank crisis and its handling were possible.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Given to Evans, 19 Jun 1970, FCO 17/1103/20

¹⁰⁶⁸ Riches to Walker, 7 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

Consociational Outcomes

Political Stability

Under the circumstances of the third Chehabist phase, political stability in Lebanon was surprisingly high. Policymakers were ineffective, but civil order was largely sustained, even in times of crisis – which became increasingly common. They weathered the June 1967 War, and the regular violence of raids and reprisals between Israel, the Palestinians, and frustrated Lebanese did not escalate into full-blown conflict.

While Charles Helou proved unable to cut a unifying figure for the country, Chehab, although removed from the public eye, continued to be “a stabilising influence” on Lebanon amidst rising labour disputes and problems with Nasser.¹⁰⁶⁹ But this dynamic could not endure indefinitely.

Democracy

In terms of polyarchal criteria, Lebanon under Helou was a mixed bag. Elections were held on time, and transitions of power were peaceful. However, the elections continued to be marginalised by consociational voting, and were becoming less fair as the Deuxième Bureau grew bolder in its interventions. And as tensions heightened, democratic imperatives could be at odds with one another. For example, Raymond Edde was a major Christian leader, so his return to parliament in 1965 should have been palliative. Yet under the circumstances, the presence in the chamber of another anti-Chehabist firebrand was “likely to prolong the present rather unfortunate polarisation of the Chamber into two, artificially constituted and sharply divided groups – unfortunate because it constantly gets in the way of the smooth conduct of the Chamber’s day-to-day business”.¹⁰⁷⁰

The full range of viewpoints and sources of information was available in the Lebanese press, despite occasional censorship. The problem of army involvement in politics was not helped when, in the summer of 1965, Helou declared press denigration of the army would no longer be tolerated, and to demonstrate his seriousness, legal action would be pursued against several outspoken journalists.¹⁰⁷¹ The assassination of Kamel Mroue, the editor of

¹⁰⁶⁹ Riches to Stewart, 2 Apr 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/2

¹⁰⁷⁰ Hankey to Morris, 17 Jul 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/8

¹⁰⁷¹ Hankey to Morris, 17 Jul 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/8

al-Hayat, the following summer was also taken as a challenge to free expression, as the Egyptian Embassy was widely believed to be behind the murder. Associational autonomy remained intact, although some groups (including the PPS) had been banned. Inclusive citizenship was also broadly respected.

Despite these issues, as well as bifurcated parliament's undermining of the principle of 'grand coalition', Lebanon's elite were still able to shut down segmental unrest when it got out of hand in the third Chehabist stage, or when it took on a particularly sectarian character.¹⁰⁷² Democratic institutions were thus still present under Helou, though by the end of the decade they would all be seriously threatened by the pressures of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the movements of Palestinian commandos in Lebanon.

Constitutive Elements

If we only considered the indicators of political stability and democracy, Lebanon's condition in the final Chehabist era would look sufficiently robust. Yes, these institutions had been weakened and marginalised, but the country does not appear on the brink of collapse into war. Perhaps this is why so many Lebanese and foreigners alike during the period seemed to believe that the situation was bound to improve. There was, at the time, "a familiar Lebanese saying that nothing ever actually *happens* in the Lebanon: a proverb which may well hold good a little longer, though not indefinitely".¹⁰⁷³

When we turn to the specifically consociational characteristics, however, we see just how fragile Lebanon had become. The essential, definitional factor in a consociational democracy is its elite coalition: Segmental leaders must come together to forge national policy through concessions and compromise. This solution only works if, however, if the coalition is genuinely representative, and its members have the power and authority to make decisions on behalf of their communities. During Helou's tenure, these conditions were met for only about fourteen months out of seventy-two total;¹⁰⁷⁴ even then, internal

¹⁰⁷² Riches to Stewart, 2 Apr 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/2

¹⁰⁷³ King to Moore, 5 Mar 1968, FCO 17/314/22

¹⁰⁷⁴ Here I include the first four months of Karami's third government and the full ten months, under Helou, of his fourth.

and external pressures left even these governments weak and ineffective. In the period from 1964 through 1966, *no* governments met the criteria.

The foremost issue was the bifurcation of the parliament. The very existence of a parliamentary majority was seen as fundamentally incompatible with the formation of a coalition government – a basic premise of Lebanon’s consociation was that every segment was, on its own, a minority, and each was proportionally represented. But within the parliament, ‘Chehabist/anti-Chehabist’ had become the most salient political division, with members of all sects were on both sides. Which kind of representation would take precedence?

For illustrative purposes, imagine an eight-man government, a relatively common size in the era. Constitutionally, it must be divided into four Christians, four Muslims; subdivisions might likely yield two Maronites, one Greek Orthodox, and a minority Christian on one side, and two Sunni, one Shia, and one Druze on the other. You could appoint an extra-parliamentary cabinet, but that will not be representative, and as such will cripple the ‘Grand Coalition’. By the end of 1964, deputies were anxious to form a new parliamentary government, and once again distribute portfolios, prestige, and patronage equally among the different confessional groups.¹⁰⁷⁵

So, you need to divide the ministerial positions between Chehabists and anti-Chehabists. For the sake of simplicity, assume an even split (although the Chehabists had the slightly larger bloc). Do you give each side two Christians and two Muslims? Or do you give, say, three Christians to the anti-Chehabists, because their side is more representative of Christians in general? What about the four sects with just one seat – which side gets each of them? All this is before you even factor in issues like regional representation, or start distributing ministries. Are the valuable ‘sovereign’ ministries allotted according to sect, or according to bloc?

Creating a representative, effective grand coalition becomes exponentially more difficult when you have to factor in multiple, overlapping cleavages. (It was in this context that

¹⁰⁷⁵ Riches to Morris, 14 Nov 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/54

Helou's renewed attempts to encourage a parliamentary coalition in late 1965 were taken by some as an indication he was turning on the Chehabist bloc.¹⁰⁷⁶)

Within the elite and the public alike, popular opinion was divided on what Lebanese democracy meant. Either the Deuxième Bureau was undermining democracy by interfering in politics, or the consociational system was a corrupt, undemocratic oligarchy. Many people likely believed both were true. As early as 1965, issues of social justice were stirring up "a strong and genuine resentment" among an intelligentsia who "though suffering no hardship themselves, feel on humanitarian grounds that the system is wrong".¹⁰⁷⁷

The sectarian cleavages enshrined in Lebanon's constitution continued to have high political salience, but the questions of the army and Chehabism were highly salient, too. Segments were less isolated in the late 1960s, both physically and ideologically. The Chehabist/anti-Chehabist split also reduced the system's multipolarity, even if not quite to the point of a bipolar system. This change made immobilism more likely.

The major unfavourable factor in this phase, however, was the shift from relatively low to relatively high loads on the Lebanese system. Internally, in addition to political issues, socio-economic discontent weighed heavily on the consociation. The external pressures of the Palestinian issue interplayed with sect and class, bringing the Lebanese system near to a standstill.

Lebanon's government could not crack down on labour unrest – and risk its democracy – nor could it intervene in the economy to create fairer conditions and alienate the consociational elite.

Lebanon's aspiration to democratic processes of government, her relative sophistication and prosperity, the sectarian nature of her political life, all these preclude her from adopting towards manifestations of labour and popular unrest with social causes the authoritarian attitude common in other Arab states. It is likely that ...

¹⁰⁷⁶ Riches to Morris, 16 Oct 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/25

¹⁰⁷⁷ Riches to Morris, 21 Dec 1965, FO 371/186627/1015/1

the Lebanon will find her social problems posed with an acuteness and immediacy which will prove an embarrassment to President Helou.¹⁰⁷⁸

Up until 1961, Lebanon maintained a budget surplus. This had helped the government minimise foreign pressures, as they were not dependent for financial assistance.¹⁰⁷⁹ The imperative to not be indebted to the wrong country was part of why Helou was unable to raise substantial funds for development. Under Helou's weak grasp, sectarian leaders more openly courted foreign support, especially from Nasser. Ambassador Riches warned that "the Egyptians and the Communists and the egregious Kemal Jumblatt are in effect working together to stimulate unrest in ways which could possibly be diverted into confessional channels".¹⁰⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Nasser increasingly staged anti-regime operations against Syria from Lebanese soil.¹⁰⁸¹

Chehabist Outcomes

National Unity

Through this final phase, Chehab himself persisted as a factor of cohesion – even if the rise of the military in the years since the PPS coup had eroded some of the support behind him. Yet there were clearly other factors at work as well. When the new UK Ambassador arrived in Lebanon after a long absence from the country, he was stunned by the relative unity he found.¹⁰⁸² When he paid a visit to Chehab several weeks later, Ambassador Edden raised the point again:

I mentioned that I had been very struck, coming back to Lebanon, by the apparent improvement in interconfessional relations. Chehab fully agreed that this was no longer a serious problem and that some degree of Lebanese national feeling existed. ... He had not even realised himself, until he had ceased to be President, how far this process had succeeded. He thought it had recently gone even further. ... Now, if it at

¹⁰⁷⁸ Saunders, covering note, 13 Apr 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/2

¹⁰⁷⁹ 'Report on the Lebanese Economy', 17 May 1965, FO 371/180775/1012/3, p. 15

¹⁰⁸⁰ Riches to Stewart, 2 Apr 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/2

¹⁰⁸¹ Riches to Walker, 1 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

¹⁰⁸² Edden to Secretary of State, 7 Sep 1970, FCO 17/1103/32

any time it became essential to bash (taper) the Fedayeen he would not expect a Moslem reaction.¹⁰⁸³

In hindsight, Chehab overestimated the strength of that national feeling – or, perhaps, he underestimated the strength of confessional allegiances. But it is clear that the promotion of a sense of Lebanese nationalism had some success.

Le Social/Modernisation

The economic unrest was partly a function of Chehabist policy. Chehab's impassioned pursuit of development had emptied the government coffers, and there were no longer sufficient funds to continue apace.¹⁰⁸⁴ While Lebanon remained far from the point of crisis, the people "were disquieted by the lack of solid and enduring foundations for Lebanese prosperity".¹⁰⁸⁵ The public was also more attuned to socio-economic disparities after Chehab. In word and deed as President, Chehab had identified the achievement of social justice, equality, and modernisation as Lebanon's most urgent tasks. Shortly before leaving office, he had announced a Five-Year Plan for development that was now gathering dust, its ambitious projects unrealised.

Chehab's commitment to social reform and social justice never wavered, and he genuinely seemed to have expected Helou to follow suit. In early 1964, Chehab described to the UK ambassador how hard he had worked over the previous six years just to get things moving, but he was unfalteringly optimistic that his successor would continue on the same path.¹⁰⁸⁶ Shortly before the end of his tenure, Chehab again impressed upon the UK ambassador that socio-economic development and social justice must continue to progress if Lebanon were to survive; he was confident, however, "that the very force of circumstances would oblige his successor to continue his policies".¹⁰⁸⁷ Indeed, according to Boutros, it was this 'obsession' with ensuring the Chehabist path towards building a modern state continued

¹⁰⁸³ Edden to Chancery, 16 Sep 1970, FCO 17/1103/38

¹⁰⁸⁴ Riches to Walker, 1 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

¹⁰⁸⁵ Riches to Walker, 1 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

¹⁰⁸⁶ Riches to Morris, 12 Mar 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/8

¹⁰⁸⁷ Riches to Butler, 1 Jul 1964, FO 371/175695/1015/20, p. 2

which prevented him from more forcefully opposing those who insisted upon his re-election.¹⁰⁸⁸

In a series of letters from 1964-65, Father Lebret reiterates his desire that Chehab stay on as president for at least another two or three years, so they could see IRFED's five-year plan implemented. Although he always adds provisos that of course Chehab knows best, it is clear Lebret has little faith that their work will go forward without him.¹⁰⁸⁹

Chehab began to strike a somewhat more pessimistic tone after Helou's election, not so much in reference to the president-elect as the political class in general. Chehab now told Ambassador Riches that, "though he had conducted his six-year rescue operation like a soldier and thought that he had brought it to a successful conclusion, the patient was still only convalescent. The politicians, he added with some scorn, seemed to think it was fully restored to health".¹⁰⁹⁰ In his dispatch on the subject, Riches noted that despite Chehab's endorsement, he worried Helou may not have the fortitude to pursue a difficult reform agenda.¹⁰⁹¹ In the end, Helou failed,

To give a forceful lead in asserting that the need of the State to provide the Lebanon with a proper infrastructure of public works and utilities, of social services and institutions within which Lebanese free enterprise can flourish and develop, connotes a real financial contribution to public revenue and a real devotion to the public good on the part of that same free enterprise.¹⁰⁹²

Chehab wrote to Lebret with an update on their project in November 1965, a year into Helou's tenure. Chehab was so frustrated with the new regime's failure to carry on with development that he had spoken out publicly for the first time since his resignation. Yet he

¹⁰⁸⁸ Boutros (2009), pp. 111-12

¹⁰⁸⁹ See letters from Lebret to Chehab dated 3 May and 6 Jul 1964, and 19 Aug 1965, in *Cahier No. 4*, Les Amis du Pere Lebret, La Mission IRFED Liban, March 1983

¹⁰⁹⁰ Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33, p. 3

¹⁰⁹¹ Riches to Butler, 21 Aug 1964, FO 371/175696/1015/33, p. 3

¹⁰⁹² Riches to Stewart, 1 Jan 1966, FO 371/180766/1011/3

evidently still believed that if things ever got bad *enough*, the intransigence would end.¹⁰⁹³ Lebreton replied to Chehab:

We knew well that, with you out of power and us departed, the project drawn up with much effort under your direction would crash into systemic opposition. In terms of scientific development research, our five years of work beside you were very fruitful; but in terms of practical application, under current conditions, we are, it must be admitted, faced with a grave failure.¹⁰⁹⁴

When Kamal Jumblatt began to rally together a leftist coalition with explicitly socialist aims, it was believed that many Chehabists, including the general himself, were quietly sympathetic to the movement, “because he represents the only form of pressure which might effectively influence the selfishness and lack of social conscience of those who dominate the Lebanese economy”.¹⁰⁹⁵ A social justice movement with Chehab at its head was moderate, if somewhat ineffective. The daring and confrontational Kamal Jumblatt, however, meant that this new wave could include the seeds of revolution; it also provided organisation necessary to mobilise people, which had been precluded by Chehab’s refusal to form a formal party. But this organisation also provided something more substantive to oppose: by late 1965, the Kataeb and others were staging counter demonstrations to Jumblatt’s leftist rallies, which deteriorated into “a free-for-all on the subject of free enterprise versus socialism”.¹⁰⁹⁶

Jumblatt’s movement was “unedifying and, in a way, farcical, but is also, I think, an indication of a basically genuine feeling, namely, that unrestricted free enterprise in the Lebanon has failed to provide either a sufficiency for every citizen or the range of welfare services normal in a civilised state”.¹⁰⁹⁷ In fact,

¹⁰⁹³ Letter from Chehab to Lebreton, 10 Nov 1965, La Mission IRFED Liban Archives, Centre Lebreton-IRFED

¹⁰⁹⁴ Letter from Lebreton to Chehab, 26 Nov 1965, in *Cahier No. 4*, Les Amis du Pere Lebreton, La Mission IRFED Liban, March 1983

¹⁰⁹⁵ Riches to Stewart, 1 Jan 1966, FO 371/180766/1011/3, p. 2

¹⁰⁹⁶ Riches to Morris, 16 Oct 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/24

¹⁰⁹⁷ Riches to Morris, 16 Oct 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/24, p. 2

We may be witnessing the hesitant beginnings of a major change in the political and social structure of the Lebanon, in which the present organisation, split vertically into confessions and sects, will be replaced by a horizontal one reflecting economic rather than confessional differences. For the moment, however, the change is only in embryo.¹⁰⁹⁸

By 1968, there was a sense that given Lebanon's combination of extreme socioeconomic disparities, a "rigid" political structure, and free expression, "some form of social revolution seems inevitable in the longer term. ... It might be no bad thing if it came sooner rather than later, but the confessional complications will clearly make it much harder for such a revolution to be brought about moderately".¹⁰⁹⁹

Chehab, wrote the British in 1965, "is no revolutionary".¹¹⁰⁰ Chehabism was ineffective at making long term changes because it refused to pick up a revolutionary mantle. However, that was also what had allowed Chehabist social justice to proceed as far as it did without inspiring true domestic confrontation. Naccache described Chehab as "a lawmaker patiently working, amidst moral anarchy and against factional turbulence, to make the law prevail and reason heard. Yet there is perhaps no greater revolution to carry out, in Lebanon, than that one".¹¹⁰¹

Conclusions

Fouad Chehab's decision to return to civilian life was the catalyst for an unprecedented chasm in the Lebanese parliament after 1964. the parliamentary divide expanded until the formation of a parliamentary coalition government became impossible.¹¹⁰² Yet due to Lebanon's consociational framework, a simple majority government was also unacceptable: "In the absence of a properly constituted party system it is felt that such a solution, which would be contrary to normal practice here, would only inflame existing

¹⁰⁹⁸ Riches to Stewart, 1 Jan 1966, FO 371/180766/1011/3

¹⁰⁹⁹ Moore to King, 5 Apr 1968, FCO 17/314/23

¹¹⁰⁰ Riches to Morris, 21 Dec 1965, FO 371/186627/1015/1

¹¹⁰¹ Naccache (1960), p. 23

¹¹⁰² Riches to Stewart, 1 Jan 1966, FO 371/180766/1011/3

feelings and in the long run weaken the efficacy of the Lebanese Parliamentary system”.¹¹⁰³ The consociational democracy was deprived of a true elite coalition in its executive branch, just as it had lost the strong, unifying presence of Chehab at its helm. Helou was not up to the task, nor did he fully understand its implications.

The National Pact codified the idea that Lebanon’s foreign policy must lean neither East nor West. But regional pressures continued to mount from 1964 to 1966, especially without Chehab’s intercessions with Nasser. Nasser had little personal affect for Helou, and the Arabs expected Lebanon to meet certain commitments in regards to Israel: first with the Jordan waters diversion and the United Arab Command, and later as a host to Palestinian commandos. Under these conditions, “Lebanon found it increasingly difficult simultaneously to play her two roles as an Arab country and as a country in which half the population is not Muslim and which enjoys the benefits of democracy and a free enterprise economy”.¹¹⁰⁴

And indeed, democracy and the free market were the other axis of contention in the final Chehabist era. Cost of living was up, development was stalled, and the economy was in the doldrums. The segmental elite, bolstered by a false sense of optimism in Lebanon’s eternal resilience, had little interest in pursuing reform at their own expense. In the absence of a functioning grand coalition there was simply no means to find a way out of these overlapping crises. By the end of the Chehabist era, more than ever before, demands for social justice and consociational stability were devouring each other. Moreover, much of the elite failed to anticipate the ramifications of allowing Intra Bank to collapse, and inadvertently triggered the demise of their economy. As for the Chehabist “system of government” itself, the UK ambassador wrote in September 1970,

Now, with the election of an anti-Chehabist, by anti-Chehabists, for anti-Chehabists, the system is only of historical interest.¹¹⁰⁵

¹¹⁰³ Hankey to Foreign Office, 24 Jul 1965, FO 371/180767/1015/11

¹¹⁰⁴ Riches to Walker, 1 Jan 1965, FO 371/180766/1011/1

¹¹⁰⁵ Edden to Secretary of State, 7 Sep 1970, FCO 17/1103/NEL1/1, p. 3

7. Conclusions

Stability in independence-era Lebanon was a fragile thing, for “political uncertainty in the Lebanon means concern not merely about the next Government but even for the future existence of the State”.¹¹⁰⁶ In his memoirs, Najib Alamuddin explains his rationale for offering up a public account of the Intra crisis:

I am convinced that the affair was the beginning of the disintegration of Lebanon and its old type of Lebanese government – a system corrupt in style and morals that had plagued Lebanon since independence and finally plunged the nation into a civil war that threatened its very survival as an independent state.¹¹⁰⁷

If the 1967 Arab-Israeli war demonstrated Lebanon’s vulnerability to external stressors, the Intra affair exposed equally keen internal weaknesses, including corruption, inequality, patrimonialism, and xenophobia. The conflict between Chehabism and consociationalism did not generate these ills, but it amplified them and left them unrestrained.

Over the years that followed, an amalgam of these stressors would drive Lebanon from its “golden age” into civil war. The Intra crash was a warning that largely went largely unheeded; an indicator that the Lebanese system could no longer bear its *internal* loads and a clear sign of the internationalisation of the domestic. The Intra crisis also revealed how precarious Lebanon’s foreign-policy neutrality was. In what was, fundamentally, a crisis of confidence, belief mattered more than fact.

Although the fall of Intra dealt a potentially mortal blow to Lebanon’s reputation as an economic centre as well as the Lebanese economy, Alamuddin believed that for those who instigated the crash, it was a success: “The upstart had been destroyed”.¹¹⁰⁸ Yet when we look into consociational theory, there is no reason why the system would encourage this level of self-sabotage. On the contrary, consociationalism is predicated on resisting the impulse to settle scores among rival groups, and instead tries to channel their energies into consensus. In a strong consociational democracy, the Intra crash could never have

¹¹⁰⁶ Riches to Steward, 9 Oct 1965, FO 371/180775/1102/1

¹¹⁰⁷ Alamuddin (1987), p. 138

¹¹⁰⁸ Salibi (1976), p. 30

happened, because someone with Intra's interests in mind would have wielded veto power. These confessional checks and balances, however, had all but eroded by the end of 1966 between the friction of Chehabism and consociationalism. A Foreign Office paper from 1967 captures this conflict, in the challenges preventing a shift of Lebanon's economy to a more stable foundation:

In order to cope with these problems, vigorous direction by the Government would appear to be needed. But this would run contrary to Lebanese political tradition and would involve partial abandonment of the *laissez-faire* principle on which the economy so far has thrived. Such intervention would also depend upon agreement between all the opposing interests at each level of the administration. There has been some expansion of Government activities in the last few years, but there is understandably hesitation in tampering with the present successful system. Moreover, Lebanese politics are dominated by the merchant and banker class, whose immediate interests lie in maintaining the existing economic structure.¹¹⁰⁹

A consociational system can only be 'democratic' to the extent that its coalition of elites genuinely represents the major segments of a population, and is able to enforce compromises he makes on their behalf – the segment must defer to his decision-making. Moves to narrow socio-economic inequalities and develop infrastructure have the potential to disrupt the elite-segmental relationship in several ways. Firstly, in a system such as Lebanon's, a part of that bond is established through various forms of patronage: in exchange for political support, people expect assistance with healthcare, employment, dealing with administrative red tape, and other basic services. If suddenly, the government then begins to provide healthcare, job training, and a more efficient bureaucracy, it reduces the leader's leverage and accountability. Development may also make communities more mobile. A segment whose members are dispersed may lose its internal coherence, and, as such, some of its political salience. Meanwhile, modernisation inevitably increases grievance in the short term, as less advantaged people become more attuned to the discrepancies between their living conditions and those of their betters.

¹¹⁰⁹ Joint Research Department Memorandum, Foreign Office, 20 Jun 1967, FO 1018/133, p. 5

This is not to suggest that Chehab and his followers were wrong to place so much emphasis on social issues and development. However, they designed the project in a fundamentally unsustainable way, failing to recognise that their successors would need more than a change of attitude to continue along their path. In addition to the funds that Helou could not raise, the continued pursuit in earnest of *Le Social* would have required structural alterations in the consociational system – or a heavy-handed approach that violated the spirit of the Pact.

The Chehabist aim to cultivate the seeds of Lebanese national identity and unity yielded bittersweet fruit. In the moment, the drive itself worked against consociational stability by undermining segmental autonomy: A consociational system works best when the segments have high political salience and are isolated from one another. However, once the consociational system stopped working, this nascent national feeling may have done much to hold Lebanon together over the turbulent decades that followed. Despite the re-emergence of Arab Nationalism with Palestinian commando issue, the Lebanese Arabists no longer opposed Lebanon's existence as an independent state. Through the years of Lebanon's devastating civil war and after, people from all sects and socio-economic spheres held tightly to the memory of Lebanon in the Chehabist era. In the Lebanese collective imagination, the late 1950s and early 1960s came to embody prosperity, opportunity, stability, and cultural relevance. For the first time, there was an idealised vision of Lebanon that appealed beyond the Christian Lebanist fold.

It is this vision which, for many, still comes to mind when they think about Fouad Chehab and his presidency. What they too often overlook, however, is that Chehabism's successes were not simply snuffed out by the ignition of regional (and, by association, sectarian) tensions. Present-day conditions in Lebanon, as Picard and Ramsbotham note, are not unlike those produced by the internal and external pressures of the late 1960s – in fact, they are “perhaps even more precarious”.¹¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, Lebanon remains constitutionally consociational – although in practice, the system barely functions. Just as the Lebanese grew accustomed to a presidential vacuum, they are now familiar with lengthy delays in government formation, postponed elections, closures of parliament, and the endless

¹¹¹⁰ Picard and Ramsbotham (2012), p. 7

deferral of critical issues for some future, more authoritative coalition to decide. The army suffers from “Commander’s syndrome”, as the past three presidents – in a trend initiated by Chehab – have been former commanders-in-chief.¹¹¹¹

The Taif Accord, which marked the end of the civil war in 1990, adjusted the terms of the national compromise. It changed the power-sharing formula to better reflect demographics, and transferred prerogatives from the presidency to transition Lebanon to a more parliamentary system. Nonetheless, the same consociational mechanisms formally structure Lebanese political life. Taif also tacked on a host of reforms to the new agreement, though few have seen progress nearly two decades on. Karam’s description of the status quo in 2012 echoes the example of the Chehabist era:

Arbitrary and partial application of reforms that have been initiated by Lebanese ruling elites under Syrian tutelage between 1990 and 2005 have in fact exacerbated confessional tension and competition, and have generated new imbalances in the post-war political system. Together, these developments have undermined the operation of Lebanon’s consociational political system and of its institutions, which could be described as quasi-dysfunctional.¹¹¹²

Yet Karam still identifies the central problem not as the contradiction between consociationalism and reform, but “the Lebanese mentality of clientelism and sectarianism”.¹¹¹³ He laments that

Post-Taif governance is not based on the expression of the will of the majority, but on consensus between political elites representing major ‘communities’ and partisan formations. This is why consensus democracy has prioritised managing successive crises over realizing reforms. Electoral reform was only tackled from a perspective of inter-confessional balance and interest.¹¹¹⁴

¹¹¹¹ Bahout (2014), p. 5

¹¹¹² Karam (2012), p. 37

¹¹¹³ Karam (2012), p. 39

¹¹¹⁴ Karam (2012), p. 38

Yet these examples (if not the postwar Lebanese situation more generally) show *precisely how consociationalism is supposed to work*. They are not examples of its failure, but rather its proper functioning.

For a consociational political system to maximise its stability and democracy, consociational conditions must be met. Consociationalism may not be *very* democratic, or all that good at promoting stability. It may be incompatible with much reform and development. What it is not, and what it will never be, is simply a ‘broken’ Westminster-style democracy. Much like a rabbit is not a broken dog, it is a different beast. As such, a consociational democracy cannot be *reformed* into another kind of democratic system. Any stability or democracy it can offer is dependent on the establishment of a consociation at its centre, a Grand Coalition of segments. Now as then, reforms which do not account for political confessionalism are liable to make Lebanon’s current political system *less* stable and *less* democratic.

Social justice, modernisation and a more robust Lebanese national identity cannot be achieved by undermining stability and democracy in Lebanon. Either they must somehow be realised in a way that does not threaten the system, or the consociational apparatus itself must be uprooted. Uprooting would be a formidable task. Through the 1970s and 1980s, widespread interest in reform and de-confessionalisation spurred the development of many serious proposals on the subject. Yet even then, none was able to gain traction, and when the civil war finally halted it was through a reassertion of consociational principles.¹¹¹⁵

The question of how to safely dismantle a consociational democracy are well beyond the scope of this thesis. What can be stated, however, is that it cannot simply be reformed away, or erased by generosity of spirit.

In his memoirs, Fouad Boutros wonders whether things would have turned out differently for Lebanon if Chehab had allowed his mandate to be renewed; if Chehab could have protected Lebanon from the crises which soon came its way. So many things might have gone differently. Perhaps the Chehabist era would have continued if Chehab had served

¹¹¹⁵ Picard (1994)

another term in 1964 or '70, or if just one more MP had voted for his protégé Elias Sarkis in that latter election, rather than Sleiman Frangieh; if a Chehabist political party had been formed.

Within the limits of what can be known, Boutros believes that the situation would have unfolded much the same regardless of who was in power: “Fouad Chehab did not have a magic wand that, alone, could have saved Lebanon from the wild path it followed, after 1967, towards the abyss”.¹¹¹⁶

Lebanon's consociational system was sophisticated in many respects, but it had not yet developed an effective mechanism for the transfer of power. Indeed, this is a problem that persists in contemporary Lebanon, though the diminished power of the presidency means it is less problematic. The campaign posters for Chehab that appeared on the streets of Beirut in 2014 would be plastered over and forgotten long before a president was elected. The idea of a presidential vacuum – so terrifying in 1964 that the Chehabists thought the very prospect might force their General to stay in office – had become banal, a source not of fear but of frustration.

The absence of such a mechanism forced Chehab to assume power in 1958, as the only person around whom a consensus could be built. But the general did not recognise the realities of the system he had so reluctantly joined. He believed in a democratic, more equal and fairer Lebanon which was simply outside the scope of possibility for a consociational democracy. The Chehabists attempted to quietly reform their way out of consociationalism through social justice, modernisation, and national unity, but in so doing they compromised the system's ability to function. This, ultimately, is what condemned the Chehabist project. It is important to not undersell Chehabism's achievements. The Chehabist approach succeeded, for a time, in leading Lebanon away from the perils of confessional conflict. Chehab was able to persuade the Lebanese Arab nationalists – as well as Nasser himself – of the benefits of Lebanon's continued existence as an independent, sovereign state, and forge the nucleus of a broader Lebanese national identity. While his reforms were circumscribed, Chehab helped rationalise significant elements of Lebanon's

¹¹¹⁶ Boutros (2009), pp. 122-23

administration, and brought public services like piped water, electricity, and schooling to many thousands of the least-advantaged Lebanese.

While Chehab was in office, Lebanon was reasonably stable and prosperous, and when the time came for power to change hands, it happened peacefully and constitutionally. It is worth remembering that both of independent Lebanon's previous experiences of the transfer of power, in 1952 and 1958, had yielded crises that were only resolved upon General Chehab's intervention.

Here, perhaps, is a key observation: the political stability that persisted under Fouad Chehab took place *despite* his policies of unity and social justice, both of which threatened the consociational system. Stability was maintained through the presence of Chehab himself, as perhaps the only public figure in Lebanon who appeared unmotivated by wealth or power. Chehab declined to stay in power and refused to create a formal political party which might have been able to sustain the agenda in his absence. All these decisions come down to his character, but also his understanding of democracy and propriety. This is the final paradox of the Chehabist project, the ultimate irony: Fouad Chehab was too proud and too upright to save Lebanon at the expense of his own personal integrity.

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